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New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/94)

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour to take the floor when you, Sir, are presiding over the General Assembly.

Argentina welcomes the condolences and displays of solidarity regarding the attack in New York yesterday. We express our condolences to all the victims — five of whom were Argentines — including citizens of Belgium and the United States. Argentina reaffirms its strong condemnation of terrorist attacks and violence in all its manifestations. We reiterate the need to increase the fight against that scourge.

I will now move on to the issue at hand. At the outset, I wish to welcome the presence today of Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and to thank him for his very detailed statement this morning (see A/72/PV.38).

Argentina fully aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of El Salvador, on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/72/PV.38), and wishes to make the following points in our national capacity.

Argentina's historical position has been that the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba must be urgently lifted and is contrary to international law, in particular to the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in internal affairs, freedom of commerce and international navigation and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Within the framework of our absolute commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and to multilateralism, Argentina opposes the use of unilateral coercive measures, the extraterritorial implementation of national laws and the adoption of discriminatory commercial practices. In this regard, Argentina has traditionally supported resolutions of the General Assembly against the embargo and has spoken against it whenever the subject has arisen, in both regional forums and other international organizations.

The Government of Argentina welcomed the process initiated by the Governments of Cuba and the United States at the end of 2014 to normalize bilateral relations. While we welcomed the executive orders implemented by the United States Department of the Treasury and the Department of Commerce in 2015 and 2016, which introduced amendments to regulations on the subject, we note with concern that they contrast with those announced on 16 June 2017 that reverse some of

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the aforementioned measures and seek to reinforce the implementation of the embargo.

We also regret that the laws underpinning the embargo are still in effect. Their implementation continues to impede the full development of the Cuban people. The adoption of resolution 72/4 by a large majority reaffirms the unequivocal message of the international community that the embargo against Cuba must be lifted. Argentina reaffirms its conviction that a dialogue without preconditions between both parties that involves the mutual recognition of both Governments as legitimate and equal interlocutors will resolve all pending problems between the United States and Cuba, including the lifting of the embargo.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya): Kenya would like to align itself with the statements made earlier this morning by the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; and the representative of Gabon, on behalf of the Group of African States (see A/72/PV.38).

Kenya has always believed that sanctions and blockades are a crude and irresponsible instrument of unilateral or collective international action and diplomacy. Our twenty-first-century global civilization should never condone the use of such crude and indiscriminate instruments for international diplomacy as unilateral sanctions or blockades. Sadly, unilateral sanctions and blockades continue to attract the attention of the powerful and the dominant. Let us be clear — such sanctions and blockades are prejudicial and purely politically self-serving. They serve no multilateral purpose and, in fact, frustrate and undermine multilateral solutions. Furthermore, as we have seen, more often than not, sanctions serve to entrench those whom they ostensibly target.

As we all know, tragically and inevitably, in the long run sanctions and blockades are unsustainable and poorly enforceable. Moreover, the suffering and pain they cause rarely, if ever, justify the perceived injustice that motivated their initial application. If truth be told, only the unilateral enforcer takes any political capital and satisfaction from unilateral sanctions and/or blockades, but little else. At best, sanctions expose the vulnerability of those subjected to them, who are, for the most part, the poor and the defenceless. The United Nations is a body that needs to hold itself to a higher ideal than that which condones the crude choice and use of untargeted, horizonless unilateral sanctions and blockades.

The United Nations should hold itself up to an ideal that does not demonstrate implicitly that a Member State with overwhelming power can be a unilateral enforcer of sanctions or blockades. Indeed, what the United Nations holds itself up to should be an ideal that should never demonstrate that the weak can suffer sanctions or blockades without recourse and almost without end.

Those conditions are already true and met before unilateral sanctions or blockades by a powerful entity are selected and implemented. Moreover, the United Nations should never uphold any sanctions or blockades that do not meet the threshold of precision and swift and determinative action. Neither should sanctions and blockades be prejudicial to and discriminatory against a Member State simply because that Member State does not adhere to the cultural values or political ideals of another Member State or a group of Member States.

In the case of the tragic and seemingly perennial unilateral sanctions and blockade levelled against the Republic of Cuba, it seems to my delegation that history has become our political and diplomatic prisoner. Surely we know better. We need not be consumed by habit or our political imperatives. Why must we allow our historical habit to become a determinant of our current action? That would be truly tragic.

We all know that the point of the unilateral sanctions and blockade against Cuba has already been made many times over throughout the years. Last year, in this very Hall, the enforcer of those sanctions acknowledged that they and the blockade finally needed to be lifted. Some 191 Member States agreed by voting for resolution 71/5 last year. My delegation believes that the time to end the sanctions and blockade against Cuba is indeed long past. Let the people of Cuba be free to join the collective of international citizenry and enjoy the same unhindered social, economic and political freedoms that the rest of us enjoy. Let us not let sanctions and blockades — unilateral or otherwise — stand in their way. Let us not let sanctions become the instrument that we or anyone else uses to leave Cuba behind. It is for those reasons that Kenya voted in favour of resolution 72/4.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned

Countries, and by the representative of the Republic of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/72/PV.38).

We wish to present the following explanation of vote in our national capacity. We welcome the presence of Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, a friendly country, and we reaffirm Syria's support for the Government and our friends, the people of Cuba, as they confront the decades-long, unjust embargo imposed by the United States.

We also congratulate Cuba on the significant diplomatic victory achieved today, which reflects the international community's rejection of the injustice that Cuba has suffered for 55 years. It is also a clear illustration of the lack of regard that the United States has for international law and of its stubbornness in implementing barbaric policies involving embargoes, punishments and unilateral coercive and economic measures against States that refuse to become its satellites and accept its dictates, while defending their independence and national sovereignty.

The international community had optimistically welcomed the previous United States Administration's policy concerning Cuba, as it believed that it might one day lead to a lifting of the unjust embargo against the Cuban people. The current American Administration has shown once again that the political doctrine of the establishment in power in the United States is incapable of changing and that it will continue to act based on the logic of the primacy of military force and economic influence with a view to imposing its hegemony throughout the entire world, breaking the will of free countries and bringing freedom- and dignity-loving people to their knees.

Such unilateral coercive economic measures constitute a collective punishment imposed on an entire population. They undermine the United Nations system and impede it from carrying out its legitimate mandates. Furthermore, they pose a major obstacle to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They also hinder trade operations and the enjoyment of human rights. The Governments of Member States that resort to illegal blockades and unilateral coercive economic measures must begin to understand that those unjust policies have only led to the rejection of the West. They provide extremist and terrorist movements with a new weapon for recruiting from among the weak, who are the most affected by such illegal unilateral measures, thereby increasing tensions in international relations and threatening international peace and security.

For those reasons, the Syrian Arab Republic voted in favour of resolution 72/4. Syria calls on the General Assembly to act in accordance with the provisions and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as its own relevant resolutions, with a view to implementing effective mechanisms to end such aggressive practices, policies involving embargoes, and unilateral economic measures, which run contrary to international law. Moreover, my country calls for the implementation of sound mechanisms that would hold accountable Member States that resort to illegal economic embargoes, which, owing to their political, financial and legal repercussions, have disastrous consequences for the economies of the countries targeted by such embargoes. The latter paralyse and destroy sensitive economic sectors that provide for the basic needs of the population, namely, health care, education, nutrition, agriculture, industry, trade, technology and communications.

My country demands that the blockade imposed by the United States of America be lifted. We also demand an end to unilateral measures imposed by the United States of America, the European Union and other States against many other Member States, including the Syrian Arab Republic. Such unilateral coercive and aggressive measures are preventing Syrians from accessing basic services, such as food, medicine, education, and medical, agricultural and industrial equipment, as well as spare parts for civil aviation and telecommunications equipment. Such measures constitute a major human rights violation and have led to huge losses for the economy, thereby undermining efforts to combat terrorism.

In conclusion, one question remains unanswered: how can the Governments of some Member States reconcile their statements delivered in this Hall in which they call for the rejection of the embargo imposed against Cuba and other States with their policies aimed at putting humanitarian, economic and social pressure on various other nations through the use of illegal economic embargoes against the peoples which I just mentioned.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation strongly condemns the heinous act of

terrorism that took place yesterday in New York City and expresses its condolences and sympathy to the families of all of the victims.

I shall now present the Assembly with the following explanation of vote on resolution 72/4.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba runs counter to the principles of international law governing relations among States and contradicts the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for promoting solidarity, cooperation and friendly relations among nations, and for the resolution of disputes and problems among countries through peaceful means and dialogue, based on equality and mutual respect for the sovereignty of Member States.

The decades-long embargo has seriously jeopardized the legitimate rights and interests of Cuba and other States, as well as the freedom of trade and navigation, and serves no other purpose than to inflict tremendous hardship and suffering on the people of Cuba, especially women and children. It must therefore be lifted immediately, as requested by the General Assembly in all relevant resolutions, including the one just adopted today (resolution 72/4).

Furthermore, inasmuch as the international community faces major challenges such as food crises, increased poverty, unemployment and malnutrition, the imposition of the embargo seems more unjustifiable and inhumane than ever and deserves stronger objections at the international level. Additionally, the adoption of General Assembly resolutions on the subject over the course of so many years — and with such a wide range of support — indicates the strong objection of the international community to unilateral economic coercive measures in general and to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba in particular. Calls to put an end to that unlawful and inhumane embargo are a sign of increasing sympathy for the Government and the people of Cuba.

Cuba is not the only country that is suffering from United States sanctions. Unjustified sanctions introduced or imposed under various false pretexts by the United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past four decades — even after the agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and its endorsement by the Security Council — continue to target innocent people and obstruct their basic rights. Regrettably, unilateral coercive measures have become a consistent element of the policies of the United States, even where a Security Council resolution has clearly prohibited it.

Considering the fact that such unilateral sanctions are contrary to the principles of international law, the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and peaceful coexistence among them, the Islamic Republic of Iran remains opposed to the application of unilateral economic and trade measures by the United States of America against other countries. We are also opposed to the extraterritorial application and effects of such national legislation on the sovereignty of other States and on free trade among nations. We emphasize the urgent need to put an end to such erroneous policies and measures, as well as the need to ensure the full implementation of the provisions of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 72/4, adopted today.

Mr. Gimolieca (Angola): Our delegation also aligns itself with the statements of other delegations in strongly condemning the terrorist attack yesterday in downtown Manhattan. We express our condolences to the families of the victims and wish those who were injured a speedy recovery.

Allow me to begin by extending a word of welcome to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. The Republic of Angola associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Gabon, on behalf of the Group of African States; the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; and the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/72/PV.38).

Angola voted in favour of resolution 72/4, adopted today by the Assembly, because it considers the persistence of the unjust and severe economic, commercial and financial embargo, unilaterally imposed by the United States against Cuba for more than 55 years, to be a retrograde measure inflicting severe damage on the Cuban people, especially those that are most vulnerable. Angola expected the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries to encourage the American authorities to take further measures towards putting an end to the embargo and to show respect for the Cuban people, who have freely exercised their right to decide on their own political

and economic system in order to ensure the sustainable development of the island.

The extraterritorial nature of the embargo is reflected in the financial persecution directed against certain other countries' banks and the imposition of new fines on institutions for violating the rules imposed by the United States Government with regard to Cuba. That causes severe obstacles to the economic, cultural and social development of the island and has a significant negative impact on several sensitive sectors such as public health, which severely affects the well-being of the Cuban people. In that context, we regret the measures announced by the current Trump Administration that impose additional obstacles on the already limited trade opportunities between Cuba and the United States.

Angola reaffirms its commitment to respecting, preserving and promoting the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, which provide for access to multilateralism and to collective efforts to maintain international peace and security, economic growth and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. My country recognizes and once again congratulates the Secretary-General on his efforts aimed at ending the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba.

In that connection, Angola reiterates its unconditional support for the implementation of the recommendations contained in resolution 71/5, of 26 October 2016, on the topic before us today. I take this opportunity to appeal once again to the international community to renew its efforts to promote a constructive and transparent dialogue between the two countries in order to achieve the objectives set out in relevant resolutions on the matter.

The progress achieved in 2015 and 2016 showed that Cuba and the United States can coexist in a cordial manner with respect for their differences. In conclusion, Angola encourages the United States and Cuba to continue to work to build a relationship based on dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect for the benefit of both countries and their peoples.

Mr. Phansourivong (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I would like to express our deepest condolences to the United States, Argentina and Belgium for the loss of human life in the wake of the terrorist act that occurred yesterday in lower Manhattan, New York City. We condemn that heinous attack.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ecuador and Singapore on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, respectively (see A/72/PV.38).

The Lao People's Democratic Republic voted in favour of resolution 72/4 in order to reaffirm our position that the imposition of the unilateral embargo on Cuba, with its extraterritorial implications, has not only hindered the socioeconomic development of that nation, but has also contradicted the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, as well as the sovereign equality of States and the freedom of international trade and navigation.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the progress achieved over the past few years on the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Cuba and the United States, including the reopening of the embassies in the respective capitals of both countries. However, it is regrettable to see that the progress made through years of effort has now been compromised. Nevertheless, we hope that the embargo on Cuba will be lifted, as we firmly believe that the lifting of the embargo will not only be beneficial to both countries, but will also benefit the region and the world at large.

Mr. Castro Cordoba (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We join others in condemning the cowardly terrorist attack that took place here in New York City on 31 October and express our solidarity with the United States, Argentina and Belgium for the irreparable loss of human life.

My country associates itself with the interventions made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/72/PV.38). In addition, in our national capacity, we wish to reiterate the reasons why we voted in favour of resolution 72/4. We also welcome Foreign Minister Rodríguez Parrilla.

Costa Rica wishes to highlight once again the historic and significant progress that has taken place since 2014 through the process of the improvement and re-establishment of bilateral ties between the United States and Cuba. In that spirit, my country encourages

the parties to maintain the agreements reached, to encourage further bilateral dialogue between the two parties and to replace the blockade, which has been in place for more than 55 years, with a fraternal meeting of the peoples in all areas of economic, social, technological and political cooperation.

In strict respect for international law and the principles on which the Charter of the United Nations is based and consistent with its foreign policy, Costa Rica reiterates its rejection of the unilateral and extraterritorial measures that a State may apply against another by imposing its own laws and regulations on third countries. Over the past few years, Costa Rica and Cuba have continued to strengthen their diplomatic relations in the fields of politics, economics and cooperation. Through the visit of the delegation of Costa Rica to Cuba in 2015, bilateral trade and cooperation in areas such as higher education, technical cooperation and scientific exchange, sports and health have been promoted.

In the same vein, in March, a memorandum of understanding on science, technology and innovation was signed between Costa Rica and Cuba in order to promote and facilitate a cooperative relationship in such matters. That memorandum is an example of the constant dialogue between the two countries to work together to coordinate development in order to support and complement the programmes for strengthening human talent, with agreement on priority areas so as to be able to align efforts and achieve common objectives.

We live in an interconnected world in which solidarity and respect must be the basis of our exchanges. We cannot face the problems of the present by constantly reusing the tools of the past, especially if they have not been effective. The Organization, through the General Assembly, has manifested, clearly and forcefully, its disapproval of the blockade. It is time to definitively end it and build bridges between nations and peoples.

I would like to conclude with the words spoken by the President of the Republic, Mr. Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera, in his statement during the recent general debate:

> "In that regard, considering that unilateral economic sanctions are not efficient ways to punish Governments but can seriously harm the rights of peoples to well-being and development, I once again would like to express the opposition of my country to the embargo that the United States has imposed against Cuba for 55 years, with high human, economic and social costs for its population" (*A/72/PV.5, p. 24*).

Costa Rica hopes that the blockade will soon be lifted.

Mr. Rahmanto (Indonesia): I would like to express our sympathy and condolences to the people and the Government of the United States, as well to the peoples and the Governments of Argentina and Belgium, in the wake of the horrendous attack in New York City on 31 October. We condemn all acts of terrorism.

Indonesia aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (see A/72/PV.38).

Indonesia would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/72/94) on today's agenda item.

After more than five decades, we are still witnessing the detrimental impacts of the long-standing embargo on the lives of the Cuban people. As a consequence of the embargo, the Cuban people have been left behind. Cuba has been unable to realize its full potential and improve its economic, trade and financial relations with the rest of the world. It has been unable to exercise its full rights to reach for broader economic opportunities or build high-quality public health care and education. In that respect, there has been virtually unanimous support on the part of Member States to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

The policy of the United States in 2015 and 2016 was encouraging and generated hope that the peoples of Cuba and the United States could live together in an amicable environment, respecting their differences while being able to cooperate for the benefit of the two countries and peoples. It is therefore disheartening to witness new measures being put in place that are aimed at further tightening the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Today, Indonesia joined the majority of Member States in voting in favour of resolution 72/4. Indonesia reaffirms its fundamental belief that the continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba contradicts the main principles of international law, including the Charter of the United

Nations, the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States, the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention in States' domestic affairs, and international humanitarian law. Indonesia would like to emphasize that the application of the embargo defies the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which urges States to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures that are not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations and that impede the full achievement of economic and social development.

To conclude, Indonesia would like to reiterate our support for the rights of the Cuban people to enjoy full freedom in their economic and social development. Towards that goal, we call for dialogue and cooperation as essential elements required for lifting the embargo against Cuba.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): The Namibian delegation joins others in extending our heartfelt condolences to the victims, families and friends of those who perished in yesterday's attack here in New York. We condemn that terrorist attack in the strongest terms.

Namibia also wishes to extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, for being here with us today.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; the representative of Gabon, on behalf of the Group of African States; and the representative of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/72/PV.38).

Namibia wants to put on record its appreciation for the Secretary-General's report (A/72/94) on the implementation of resolution 71/5.

In this house of the people, the people have spoken with a loud voice. Today's vote condemning this long-standing injustice reconfirms the strong resolve of the majority of Member States not to be silenced. We stand resolute in our solidarity with the Cuban people and in our firm belief in and support for multilateralism. If what we, the people of the world, want most is peace and security and the well-being of the citizens of world through the pursuit of our development agenda, then surely a policy of exclusion, a policy of economic and commercial embargo against a people who stand head and shoulders above many of us with respect to showing genuine support through selfless cooperation in the fields of health and development, flies in the face of the principles and values for which we all stand. It undermines our collective efforts to make the world a better place.

For 55 years, Cuba and the Cuban people have been victim of this unfair and unnecessary action. The economic, commercial and financial blockade is contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. It violates the rights of the Cuban people to health and food, and their rights to education, sports and culture and to development. It also severely impacts the Cuban economy. It affects both foreign trade and investments, as well as the finances of the country. In the past year, as in previous years, the income denied to the people and the Government of Cuba derived from the export of goods and services remained the most impacted by the embargo.

As Hurricane Irma tore through the Caribbean in early September, Cuba faced its first category-5 hurricane since 1937. Many homes were destroyed, the electrical grid was severely damaged, and the agricultural sector was heavily impacted. Water services were also damaged. The economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba will severely impact the recovery of the island in the aftermath of such a massive natural disaster. Surely, the natural humanitarian reaction should be to lift the embargo in order to allow the Cubans to rebuild their island.

At this time last year we marked a historic day with the adoption of resolution 71/5, in which both the United States and Israel abstained for the first time. Indeed, we were all encouraged by such forward movement, as well as by the improved relations earlier in 2016. Former President Obama recognized that the blockade was a failed and obsolete policy that should be terminated, and prior to his departure, he urged the United States Congress to end it.

We were disheartened by the announcement on 17 June of the new policy of the new Government of the United States towards Cuba with the signing of the directive entitled, "National Security Presidential Memorandum on Strengthening the Policy of the United States towards Cuba". That directive puts forward new measures to tighten the blockade against Cuba. It reverses the positive steps taken by the previous Administration and marks a setback in the bilateral relations between the two nations. We express our

disappointment at those new tightened measures taken by the Government of the United States. We urge the United States to reconsider those new measures.

We remain hopeful that the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba will be fully lifted, that relations will improve and that the two countries will restore full economic activities to their mutual benefit. Namibia wishes to put on record once again its full support for resolution 72/4.

Ms. Khyne (Myanmar): I would like to express our profound condolences to the families of the victims of yesterday's terrorist attack in lower Manhattan and our solidarity with the United States, Argentina and Belgium. We condemn all acts of terrorism.

I am taking the floor to explain my delegation's position on resolution 72/4, which was just adopted by a large majority of Member States.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Singapore, on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; and Venezuela, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (see A/72/PV.38).

It has been more than five decades since the sanctions against Cuba were imposed and more than two decades since this item was put on the agenda of the United Nations. The General Assembly has adopted resolutions on this agenda item with an overwhelming majority of votes in favour annually. Yet, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba has not been lifted.

Myanmar has joined the majority of Member States every year to vote in favour of the resolution in order to demonstrate once again our firm rejection of the unilateral coercive measure before us today, namely, the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba, which has hindered efforts by the Cuban people to eradicate poverty, promote their economic and social development, and achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) clearly outline the overall need to work towards leaving no one behind.

As a country that has experienced similar unilateral sanctions in the past, Myanmar fully understands that the imposition of sanctions on developing countries can cause great economic hardships, especially to the poor and vulnerable populations in those countries. Myanmar believes in the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as in the norms of international law and good-neighbourliness. Nations should be guided by the principles enshrined in those guidelines, which stress the need to coexist, respect differences, promote prosperity and ensure safety.

Myanmar, together with the international community, has consistently demonstrated that the embargo, as a unilateral measure, is inconsistent with international law, transgresses fundamental humanitarian principles and contravenes the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, it is not in line with the letter and spirit of the SDGs.

Myanmar is of the view that an immediate end to the economic embargo against Cuba is necessary and that such an end will serve to promote the economic and social development of the people of Cuba. In that regard, we urge that the embargo and coercive measures be replaced by dialogue and cooperation. For those reasons, as in previous years, Myanmar has once again voted in favour of the resolution on this topic, in the hope that it will lead to the betterment of the relationship between Cuba and the United States, as well as the prosperity of the entire international community.

Ms. Fedorovich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express our deepest condolences to the United States in connection with the terrorist act that occurred yesterday, as well as to Argentina and Belgium, which also lost citizens in that attack.

Belarus voted in favour of resolution 72/4, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (see A/72/PV.38). Belarus has consistently been against the use of unilateral sanctions in foreign policy, and we believe that it is unacceptable to use measures of economic coercion that contravene the principles of international law. We consider such economic sanctions to be a method of political pressure against sovereign States.

In that connection, we stress that the positive steps undertaken in 2015 and 2016 by the United States and Cuba as part of the process of normalizing bilateral relations contributed to the easing of the unilateral coercive pressure on Cuba. That process gave the

international community hope that the long-standing economic embargo against the island of freedom would end. We saw a clear example of how resolving the situation in a civilized way, based on mutual respect and cooperation and on an equal footing, is not only possible but can be done very quickly.

That clearly demonstrates that the principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes is the correct and only way forward. We hope that that constructive process will continue in spite of the maintenance, and even the recent strengthening, of the restrictive measures against Cuba, including plans to introduce additional sanctions to the existing trade embargo. That situation not only has a negative impact on the development of the Cuban economy and the citizens of Cuba but also affects inhabitants of the United States.

Belarus remains committed to the need to resolve disputes between nations through realistic dialogue, as opposed to a policy of economic and political pressure of sanctions. We have stated repeatedly that attempts by some States to change the domestic political system of others through the use of military, political, economic or other means of pressure are unacceptable. Belarus calls for the full, comprehensive and irreversible end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba by the United States.

Mr. Miangar (Chad) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of Chad, I would like to join all other delegations in expressing my condolences to the families of the victims and to the American people following the terrorist act committed yesterday in New York City. Chad forcefully condemns that cowardly and ignoble act, and we express our solidarity to the American Government, as well as our sympathy to the Governments of Argentina and Belgium, which also lost nationals in that attack.

Chad aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Ecuador, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire, respectively, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Group of African States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (see A/72/PV.38). Nevertheless, I wish to make the following statement in my national capacity.

Chad welcomes the vote in favour of the resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (resolution 72/4). Chad, wishing, on the one hand, to safeguard respect for the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States and, on the other, to preserve cooperative relations between States, was among the first countries to applaud the restoration of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba.

With a view to encouraging the creation of favourable conditions for the consolidation of the progress made on the path towards the normalization of relations between the two States, Chad's most senior officials have advocated at every opportunity for the definitive lifting of the embargo imposed on Cuba. Most recently, during the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chad, representing the President of the Republic, stated that:

> "Chad welcomed the resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba. There is no longer any obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two countries. My country believes, therefore, that maintaining the decades-long embargo against Cuba is unfair and counterproductive." (*A/72/PV.21, p. 18*).

It is in that spirit that Chad voted in favour of today's resolution. The overwhelming majority vote in favour of the resolution reinforces the position of my country, and that position, along with that of all Member States, seeks to extricate Cuba and its people from the current situation, which has undermined its economic efforts for decades.

Chad believes that the definitive lifting of the embargo imposed against Cuba would enable Cuba to make a greater contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the development of international trade and solidarity among States. The presence of Cuban doctors in Chad and other countries to ease the suffering of our peoples is concrete proof of the important role that that friendly country plays in international solidarity.

Chad therefore reiterates its appeal to the Government of the United States of America to follow the will of the international community as expressed by Member States.

Ms. Williams (Saint Kitts and Nevis): Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to express condolences to the United States, Argentina and Belgium in the light of the tragedy yesterday, and we condemn all acts of terrorism.

Saint Kitts and Nevis adds its voice in support of agenda item 42, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the

United States of America against Cuba", and wishes to give its reasons for voting in favour of resolution 72/4, adopted today by the majority of the membership of the United Nations (see A/72/PV.38). This is an extremely important debate that speaks to the very core of international law, the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention, and the strengthened role of the United Nations in international affairs.

Saint Kitts and Nevis has very good relations with the United States of America. It remains one of our closest and strongest partners, and we respect the role that the United States has played in international relations and in the establishment and promotion of the Organization. It is a global leader, and we acknowledge and remain grateful for its role in international affairs.

Nevertheless, my delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Venezuela, Ecuador and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Group of 77 and China, and the Caribbean Community, respectively (see A/72/PV.38). Saint Kitts and Nevis, in its contribution to the Secretary-General's report on this topic (A/72/94), advises that we do not support or implement any laws that affect the free flow of international trade. We also advise that we do not apply laws with extraterritorial effect, which impinge on the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction.

That is a principled position that extends to all States Members of the Organization. Saint Kitts and Nevis is therefore concerned that the embargo imposed on Cuba still persists. Cuba is a close ally of Saint Kitts and Nevis and has aided in the economic and social development of our country, especially in the areas of agriculture, education and health. Cuba could do even more internationally if the embargo were removed.

We consider the economic, commercial and financial embargo to be a burden imposed on our brothers and sisters in Cuba. The negative impact on the economy of that small island developing State is quite profound and unfair to the people of Cuba. No country should be left behind, especially at this critical time in history as we all strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. This is a time for international cooperation and the pooling of resources to assist one another as we face up to that great challenge.

That is why Saint Kitts and Nevis once again calls on the United States of America to remove the embargo against Cuba. The fact that the majority of Member States have traditionally voted in favour of the annual draft resolution on the topic signifies the overriding sentiment that the embargo is wrong on all levels. In that connection, we implore all Member States to respect the sanctity of the General Assembly and the decisions it takes. Failure to do that undermines the functioning of the United Nations system.

It is my delegation's hope that the two countries, Cuba and the United States, will be able to improve their relationship and embark upon a process of partnership and cooperation. We can learn a lot from one another, but the embargo remains an impediment to that process. That is why Saint Kitts and Nevis supported today's resolution 72/4. We reiterate our call on both countries to find common ground, so that the entire international community can move on from this impasse.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): Brazil aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/72/PV.38). We would like to make the following comments in our national capacity.

On behalf of my delegation, I also warmly welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, to this important debate.

For decades, Brazil has advocated for the normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Cuba. In that context, the Brazilian Government was delighted to follow the process of dialogue and the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries carried out in 2015 and 2016. We regret, therefore, the recent measures announced by the current Administration of the United States that seek to reinforce the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, including its extraterritorial dimensions.

From Brazil's point of view, the blockade represents an anachronistic policy that has negative effects not only for Cuba, but for our entire region. In addition to being a flagrant violation of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, the blockade continues to negatively affect the welfare of the Cuban people, especially the most vulnerable.

The lifting of the embargo against Cuba is a universal cause and has the unwavering support of the

international community, as made explicit by the voting results on the resolutions on this topic in previous sessions of the General Assembly — particularly last year, when there were no votes against. The result of the voting this morning reiterates the solidarity of the international community with the people and the Government of Cuba.

My delegation hopes that dialogue and cooperation between the two countries will resume soon, with the aim of overcoming the setbacks to the process of normalizing bilateral relations and thereby leading to the end of the blockade.

Ms. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we would like to join other delegations in condemning the terrorist attack that took place in this city yesterday, as well as to express our condolences to the victims from the United States, Argentina and Belgium.

We wish to welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla. We also express our gratitude for the report on today's agenda item presented by the Secretary-General (A/72/94).

Uruguay aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of El Salvador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (see A/72/PV.38).

As in previous years, Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 72/4, which once again this year was submitted by the delegation of Cuba on the understanding that the blockade against that country contravenes the rules of international law and is contrary to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with regard to the principles of non-intervention, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the legal equality of States.

As a matter of principle, Uruguay rejects and does not recognize in its national legislation any other State's extraterritorial application of domestic laws, as well as any direct or indirect mechanism that constitutes unilateral actions by a State with the objective of sanctioning the sovereign decisions of another State, whether it be political, economic, commercial, social, cultural or anything else in nature. In that regard, we condemn the application of unilateral coercive measures by the United States against Cuba.

Against that backdrop, our country considers that the sanctions imposed and the extraterritorial laws adopted against Cuba represent not only a violation of international law, but also have serious consequences for the economic development of that brotherly Caribbean country and constitute a way of depriving the Cuban people of their right to development, as well as unquantifiable, non-material damage to the dignity and sovereignty of the Cuban people.

By voting in favour of today's resolution, Uruguay reiterates its commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate and effective instrument for resolving disputes between States and for promoting international cooperation, human rights, security and understanding among peoples.

Ms. Yánez Loza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to join others in condemning yesterday's terrorist act and to offer my condolences, on behalf of the people and the Government of Ecuador, to the Governments of the United States, Belgium and Argentina, all of which suffered losses in the attack.

Speaking in its national capacity, and without prejudice to our role as Chair of the Group of 77 and China, my delegation aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/72/PV.38).

My delegation now wishes to comment on agenda item 42, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

As in previous years, we voted in favour of resolution 72/4. In accordance with the purposes, principles and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principles of the sovereign equality of States and non-intervention and non-interference in States' internal affairs, which are also set out in our Constitution, Ecuador has consistently spoken in support of Cuba and for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade that was imposed 55 years ago by the United States.

In thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the topic (A/72/94), we feel it necessary to emphasize that that document also shows the extent of the effects of the blockade and includes the almost universal call on the part of the members of the international community for those unilateral measures to cease.

We therefore regret that the blockade continues to be fully implemented and continues to tighten, regressing sharply from the policies adopted in 2015 and 2016 by the previous Administration of the United States.

We are concerned about the prolonged negative effects of the blockade, given its impact on the economy and development of Cuba and the obstacles it poses to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which we are all committed and for which we are all responsible. In that regard, we also recall the policy of solidarity and cooperation that Cuba has maintained for decades, particularly in matters of health emergencies. Once again, Ecuador calls for the immediate cessation of the unilateral measures imposed by the United States, as we are convinced that their elimination will benefit not only Cuba but the entire international community.

Mr. Ntonga (Zimbabwe): The delegation of Zimbabwe conveys sincere and heartfelt condolences to the United States, Argentina and Belgium on the loss of lives as a result of the horrific attack yesterday in New York City. Our thoughts and prayers go to the bereaved families in this time of loss, pain and sorrow.

We associate ourselves with the statements delivered by the representative of Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and by the representative of Gabon on behalf of the Group of African States, respectively (see A/72/PV.38).

Together with 190 other countries, Zimbabwe voted in favour of resolution 72/4, because we firmly believe that the embargo against Cuba constitutes a violation of the principles of international law and the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The embargo also constitutes a violation of human rights, as it hurts the average Cuban person. It also infringes upon the rights of other countries to trade freely with Cuba.

Despite the embargo, Cuba has continued to play constructive roles in international affairs. There are many examples of Cuba's international statesmanship and good global citizenship. Africa can attest to the intervention by Cuba when the Ebola crisis broke out in West Africa in 2015 and the World Health Organization issued a global appeal for medical staff to help fight the crisis. Despite its own severe economic challenges as a result of the trade embargo, Cuba was among the first countries to respond, as it sent legions of doctors to the region to deal with the crisis.

We commend the people of Cuba for their resilience despite facing years of an unwarranted embargo.

The international community has once again spoken in favour of dialogue and cooperation. We hope that that humble and constructive message has been heard.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 42?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.40

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

40th plenary meeting
Thursday, 2 November 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Biang (Gabon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 67

Report of the Human Rights Council

Report of the Human Rights Council (A/72/53 and A/72/53/Add.1)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In connection with this item, I would like to recall that at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 15 September 2017, the General Assembly decided to consider agenda item 67 in plenary meeting and in the Third Committee pursuant to resolution 65/281, of 17 June 2011.

I shall now make a statement on behalf of the President of the General Assembly.

(*spoke in English*)

I have the honour to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák:

"I welcome the President of the Human Rights Council, His Excellency Mr. Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli, who will today present the report of the Human Rights Council (A/72/53 and A/72/53/Add.1) to the General Assembly. I congratulate him on his leadership of the Council.

"The Human Rights Council is the main body within the United Nations dedicated to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Its importance remains clear. In so many places around the world we continue to witness violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Council, through its various mechanisms, procedures and resolutions, gives a voice to all people, including those who are most vulnerable and may otherwise not be heard. It is the main forum to address the situation of those facing gross violations, discrimination and exclusion.

"The Council has commenced the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The UPR is an inclusive peer-review mechanism, based on the principles of dialogue, cooperation and equal treatment of all Member States. This mechanism reinforces the respect for human rights at both the national and global levels. The success of the UPR is another demonstration that the Human Rights Council is an effective mechanism to advance all human rights.

"Promoting and protecting human rights is one of the three pillars of the United Nations. Each pillar is essential, and all three pillars are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. As I said at the opening of the general debate, 'Human rights are crucial; neither peace nor development can take hold without them' (*A/72/PV.3, p. 6*). The work of the Council is therefore crucial to our collective responsibility to fulfil our commitments to achieving sustainable development, including in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

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and pursuing global peace and security for 'We the peoples'.

"The debates and discussions within the Council are often intense and sometimes contentious. This is an expected scenario given the various interests and sensitivities regarding the issues on the Council's agenda. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance that Member States work constructively to ensure that the Human Rights Council remains relevant and effective in safeguarding the human rights of all people.

"Amid the political and philosophical debates, let us place at the centre our shared responsibility to promote and protect the rights of all people as well as to address violations, including gross and systematic violations around the world. The Human Rights Council should continue to be central in our efforts."

(*spoke in French*)

In accordance with resolution 65/281, of 17 June 2011, I now give the floor to Mr. Maza Martelli, President of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Maza Martelli (President, Human Rights Council) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to introduce the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/72/53 and A/72/53/Add.1) to the General Assembly. I would like to begin by congratulating the 15 recently elected members of the Human Rights Council. I have full confidence that all members of the Council will work hard to uphold the promotion and protection of human rights.

At the beginning of my presidency, I articulated what would give meaning to my mission in the Council: promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind; addressing situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations; promoting the effective coordination and the mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system; and guiding the Council's work in favour of the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity, constructive international dialogue and cooperation. These principles of resolution 60/251 have guided my presidency this year.

The work of the Human Rights Council is summarized in the report, which contains the activities, resolutions, decisions and President's statements adopted by the Council at its regular sessions this year, as well as the special session held on 14 December 2016. During the year, the Human Rights Council offered proactive responses to human rights issues through its country-specific and thematic mandates. Over the course of its three regular sessions, the Council adopted a total of 114 resolutions, 80 of which were adopted without a vote. Under its Universal Periodic Review mechanism, by the end of the year, the Council will have reviewed the fulfilment of human rights obligations by 28 member States.

I am also happy to report that the Council once again saw increased participation from small island developing States and least developed countries, thanks to the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council, which supported 27 representatives and Fellows from 26 countries.

Among the country-specific situations that the Council addressed this year, the situation in Myanmar deserved special attention. In addition to the report and the oral update of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, during its thirty-fourth session, the Council created an independent international fact-finding mission

"to establish the facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violations by military and security forces, and abuses, in Myanmar, in particular in Rakhine state",

pursuant to Council resolution 34/22. Subsequent to hearing the oral update of and holding an interactive dialogue with the fact-finding mission during its thirty-sixth session, the Council decided to extend the mission's mandate until September 2018.

The Human Rights Council also considered the human rights situation in Syria. Interactive dialogues with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic were held during all three of its regular sessions this year. The Council also extended the mandate of the Commission for another year. Moreover, during its thirty-fourth session, the Council held a panel discussion that provided an opportunity for victims to give their testimony on specific cases of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention, and, in September, the Council decided to convene a high-level panel discussion on violations

of the human rights of children in the Syrian Arab Republic at the thirty-seventh session, to be held in March 2018.

In the light of the findings of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan and considering the human rights situation there, on 14 December 2016 the Council held a special session on the situation of human rights in that country. During its thirty-fourth session, in March of this year, the Council considered the comprehensive written report of the Commission on Human Rights, which was followed by an interactive dialogue. The Council subsequently extended the mandate of the Commission for another year and requested that, inter alia, it collect and preserve evidence of alleged gross violations and abuses of human rights and make such information available to all transitional justice mechanisms, pursuant to Council resolution 34/25. The Council also urged the speedy establishment of an independent hybrid court by the African Union Commission to investigate and prosecute those responsible for violations or abuses of international human rights and international humanitarian law, also pursuant to Council resolution 34/25.

The Council examined the oral update and the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, which was established in 2016 to conduct a thorough investigation into human rights violations and abuses in Burundi since April 2015, including on their extent and whether they may constitute international crimes, with a view to contributing to the fight against impunity and to identifying alleged perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses in Burundi with a view to ensuring full accountability, in accordance with Council resolution 33/24. In September, the Council extended the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for another year. The Council also decided to request the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch a team of three experts to engage with the Burundian authorities and all other stakeholders to collect and preserve information and to forward it to the judicial authorities of Burundi in order to establish the truth and ensure that the perpetrators of deplorable crimes are all accountable to the judicial authorities of Burundi, in accordance with Council resolution 36/2.

In relation to the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the group of independent experts on accountability for human rights violations in that country, the Council decided at its thirty-fourth session to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Seoul so as to allow the implementation of the relevant recommendations made by the group of independent experts on accountability in its report, in accordance with Council resolution 34/24. Additionally, the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was extended for another year.

Concerning the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at its thirty-fifth session, the Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch a team of international experts, including experts from the region, to collect and preserve information to determine the facts and circumstances concerning alleged human rights violations and abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law, in the Kasai regions, pursuant to Council resolution 35/33.

This year, the Council has also requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue to assess progress on the implementation of its recommendations and other relevant processes related to reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, and invited the High Commissioner to continue to report on the situations of human rights in Ukraine and in Libya. Through a resolution, the Council also requested that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continue to provide technical assistance to Georgia through the operations of its Office in that country.

Regarding the human rights situation in Yemen, in September the Council requested that the High Commissioner establish a group of eminent international and regional experts with knowledge on human rights law and the context of Yemen, in order to monitor and report on the situation of human rights, make recommendations on improving the protection of human rights and engage with Yemeni authorities and all stakeholders, pursuant to Council resolution 36/31.

The Council has extended the existing country-specific special procedures mandates on Belarus, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mali, Somalia and the Sudan.

During this year's high-level panel discussion on promoting the mainstreaming of human rights

throughout the United Nations system, the Council discussed the contribution of human rights to peacebuilding through the enhancement of dialogue and international cooperation for the promotion of human rights. The Council was honoured to have the President of the General Assembly and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support participate in the discussion, which has contributed to the sharing of experiences between Geneva and New York.

In 2017, the Human Rights Council has also continued to address a number of global issues, including human rights, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through thematic debates and panel discussions, for example, in panel discussions on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in relation to the rights of the child and women's rights, as well as the integration of a gender perspective throughout the work of the Human Rights Council and that of its mechanisms.

In other panel discussions, including intersessional ones, the following topics were discussed: climate change; public health and access to medicines; unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents; racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration; the death penalty; the role of local Governments; the effects of terrorism on the enjoyment of all human rights; unilateral coercive measures; and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence in the context of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance on the full enjoyment of all human rights by women and girls. Throughout those discussions, the Council promoted universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

This year, the Council established a new special-procedures mandate, namely, the Special Rapporteur on the elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, pursuant to Council resolution 35/9. However, the Council did not extend the mandates of the Independent Expert on Côte d'Ivoire or the Independent Expert on Haiti.

I wish to take this opportunity to emphasize that the special procedures of the Human Rights Council not only provide one of the main sources of reliable information on human rights issues and situations around the world and a solid basis for dialogues and debates at the Council, but also contribute significantly to United Nations early-warning and prevention efforts. It is important that all countries cooperate with and grant access to these special-procedures mandate-holders so that they are able to carry out their work efficiently.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that, to date, 118 Member States and one observer State have issued standing invitations to thematic special procedures. However, I am concerned by the position of some States in not cooperating with the Council's mechanisms or cooperating only with a select few. I call upon all States that have not yet done so to issue standing invitations to the special-procedures mandate-holders and fully cooperate with the Council's mechanisms.

Allow me now to turn to the Universal Periodic Review, the peer-review mechanism regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the Human Rights Council. The third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review began in May, and we will open the twenty-eighth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review next Monday. With 100 per cent participation over the first two cycles, the Universal Periodic Review is a true celebration of the principle of universality.

We have witnessed very positive developments; for example, there has been an increased focus on the follow-up and implementation of recommendations and the use of development assistance by States themselves in order to facilitate follow-up activities at the national level. Furthermore, to date, 66 States have voluntarily submitted Universal Periodic Review mid-term reports in relation to recommendations put forward during the first and second cycles. I hope that these good practices continue and that they are strengthened throughout the third cycle. I am very pleased that the Secretary-General has underscored, in his reports to the current session of the General Assembly, the importance of the Universal Periodic Review process in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals.

At its thirty-fifth session, the Human Rights Council acknowledged the crucial role that parliaments play in incorporating international commitments into national policies and laws, including by supporting the implementation of recommendations supported by States concerned in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review. Furthermore, a resolution was adopted on the contribution of parliaments to the

work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review.

The active participation of civil society and national human rights institutions is a core aspect of the work of the Human Rights Council. In addition to providing us with first-hand information from the field, interjecting unique perspectives into our discussions and drawing our attention to urgent human rights situations, they play a fundamental role in follow-up and capacity-building efforts in their home countries.

I wish to inform the Assembly that I have received allegations of intimidation, threats and reprisals against individuals who seek to cooperate or have cooperated with the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, matters on which I have followed up directly with the States concerned. It is essential that duly accredited representatives of civil society and national human rights institutions be provided with a safe space to allow their voices to be heard, as well as to interact with other stakeholders. I regularly remind States that acts of intimidation and reprisals against individuals or groups that participate in the work of the Council or its mechanisms are unacceptable, and I call on them to take all necessary measures to prevent and ensure adequate protection against such acts.

This year, the Human Rights Council adopted several resolutions with recommendations made to the General Assembly. Through the resolution adopted in March on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Human Rights Council recommended that the General Assembly submit the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria to the Security Council for appropriate action (Council resolution 34/26). In its resolution on ensuring accountability and justice for all violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, also adopted in March, the Council recommended that the General Assembly

> "remain apprised of the matter until it is satisfied that appropriate action with regard to implementing the recommendations made by the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict in its report has been or is being taken appropriately at the national or international levels to ensure justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators" (*Council resolution 34/28, para. 9*).

In March, the Council also recommended that the General Assembly invite States located in the regions where people of African descent live and of which they are citizens to offer to host regional conferences on the establishment of the forum of people of African descent with the participation of people of African descent with a view to making substantive contributions on the format, structure and content of the proposed forum.

Furthermore, through its resolution on the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at its thirty-fifth session, the Council invited the General Assembly to consider holding a special commemorative meeting on the occasion of the anniversaries.

Finally, with regard to the situations of human rights in Eritrea and Burundi, the Council has requested the General Assembly to submit the reports and oral updates of the respective commissions of inquiry to all relevant organs of the United Nations for consideration and appropriate action, pursuant to Council resolutions 35/35 and 36/19, respectively.

Before concluding, I wish to highlight the increasing challenges that the Human Rights Council is facing with regard to the growing gap between the workload entailed in servicing the Human Rights Council and the resources allocated to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. With a view to finding solutions to this issue, a joint task force was established in May, comprising a representative of the Bureau of the Human Rights Council and representatives of the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Based on the report and recommendations of the task force, in September, the Bureau presented various proposed measures, including substantive time-saving measures, to the Council for its consideration.

Despite holding several consultations on the proposals, including within the framework of a Council meeting on 20 October, it has not been possible to reach consensus on the proposed measures at this stage. Further Council consultations, to be held under the leadership of the next Bureau, will be required with a view to adopting sustainable measures to allow the Human Rights Council to carry out its work more efficiently.

As the Secretary-General told the Security Council in January,

> "the interconnected nature of today's crises requires us to connect our own efforts for peace and security, sustainable development and human rights not just in words, but in practice (*S/PV.7857, p. 3*)".

Today, when the world is facing many complex crises with human rights dimensions, the work of the Human Rights Council, as the premier United Nations forum on human rights, is essential to the international community's efforts aimed at achieving peace, security and development. I therefore call on all States Members of the United Nations to focus their full and devoted attention to this issue.

I take this opportunity to thank the General Assembly for its consistent support for the Human Rights Council and its work, and express my most sincere hope that this support will continue throughout the rest of this year, as well as in the years to come.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I thank President Maza Martelli for introducing the report of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Giorgio (Eritrea): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group welcomes this opportunity to have a dialogue with the President of the Human Rights Council, His Excellency Ambassador Maza Martelli, on the annual report of the Council's activities during its eleventh cycle year (A/72/53). We also appreciate the vision and leadership role played by the presidency in carrying out its mandate to support the work of the Council.

The African Group would like to reaffirm the Council's mandate as the principal United Nations body of first instance responsible for universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner, as enshrined in the founding resolution 60/251. We wish to recall that the Council's mandate should be driven by the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue, free from politicization, selectivity and double standards.

Africa remains convinced that the Universal Periodic Review is a pillar of the work of the Human Rights Council in the fulfilment of States' human rights obligations and in the improvement of the situation on the ground. In realizing these objectives, the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review must be provided with adequate resources so as to be able to assist States develop their national capacity and expertise for the implementation of the Council's recommendations.

The African Group reaffirms its endorsement of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the third World Conference on Human Rights, on 25 June 1993. This outcome fundamentally underlines that, first, all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and that, secondly, the right to development are a universal, inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. Furthermore, Africa fully subscribes to the terms of paragraph 14 of the Vienna Declaration, which states that,

> "[t]he existence of widespread extreme poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights; its immediate alleviation and eventual elimination must remain a high priority for the international community."

We are encouraged by the Council's work in the area of the practical enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, which remains key to eradicating extreme poverty, inequality and underdevelopment worldwide, and we are of the view that more can be done in this area. The African Group places a high premium on the principle of constructive dialogue and international cooperation aimed at practically assisting States to fulfil their human rights obligations. The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations impel us to promote global solidarity and to act towards one another in the spirit of concrete international cooperation, especially with a view towards achieving socioeconomic progress in the developing world.

The African Group's principled position on the notion of the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights and their progressive realization is informed by the recognition that extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent steps must be taken to achieve better understanding of extreme poverty and its causes. A troubling aspect of this is the negation of socioeconomic and cultural rights. We do not believe in a hierarchy of rights, which is consistent with the premise of the human rights-based approach. We cannot promote one set of rights to the exclusion of others and hope to

achieve the inculcation of human rights consciousness throughout the entire world.

At this juncture, the Group would like to reaffirm the mandate of the Third Committee to examine the work of the Human Rights Council through the adoption of its annual report. We have noted increasing attempts to undermine this mandate by proposing that the report of the Human Rights Council be submitted to the General Assembly without the endorsement of the Committee. The Group therefore wishes to caution against establishing such a dangerous precedent for the methods of work of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. Any changes to this mandate would require the endorsement of the universal membership through an inclusive intergovernmental process. To this end, the African Group will continue to present its annual draft resolution towards the adoption of the report of the Human Rights Council.

In conclusion, we assure the presidency of the General Assembly of our support and cooperation as it leads the Council towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Brito Maneira (European Union): The European Union (EU) would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Maza Martelli, for presenting the Council's twelfth annual report to the General Assembly (A/72/53). The candidate countries Montenegro and Albania, and the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union has strongly supported the Human Rights Council since its establishment, and it continues to do so. Eleven years have passed since the General Assembly established the Council, and much has been achieved. The system of special procedures, the establishment of accountability mechanisms, the Universal Periodic Review and all other mechanisms of the Council have contributed positively to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. Through the delivery of technical assistance and capacity-building mandates, it has also helped countries faced with human rights crises build human rights protection policies and fulfil their international obligations.

The Council has been entrusted with the mandate of promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner. Also part of its mandate is addressing situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and making recommendations thereon. Furthermore, the Council should also promote the effective coordination and mainstreaming of human rights within the United Nations system.

There is further potential to strengthen dialogue and synergies between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council so as to ensure that human rights are central to every United Nations action. The Human Rights Council's mandate to contribute to preventing human rights violations through dialogue and cooperation and to respond promptly to human rights emergencies must be fully operationalized so as to translate early warning into early action. The Council's existing mechanisms can be better used to play this stronger prevention role. The European Union looks forward to continuing to contribute to the full implementation of the Council's wide mandate granted under its founding resolution 60/251.

Calls for enhancing and strengthening the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council have steadily increased over the past few years. The EU is firmly committed to engaging constructively in an inclusive cross-regional process of reflection, dialogue and review coordinated from Geneva, focusing on the body's working methods, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. The outcomes of such a Geneva-coordinated process would then help inform action deemed necessary in New York.

The Secretary-General addressed the Council during its high-level segment in March, alerting us all to the fact that disregard for human rights is a disease that is spreading north, south, east and west, and he continued to say that the Human Rights Council must be part of the cure. The Council is indeed part of the cure. Commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions have been established to respond to serious allegations of human rights violations and abuses around the world. The system of independent special-procedures mandate holders are our eyes and ears, contributing to a global early warning system that gives us indications of emerging crises and assisting countries in respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights obligations.

The European Union will continue to make every effort to ensure that the Human Rights Council is

not only able to help prevent or address human rights violations and abuses, including gross and systematic ones, as well as respond promptly to human rights emergencies, but also improve human rights standards and their implementation worldwide through systematic work on relevant thematic issues. In this context, the EU recalls the importance of the independence of the Council and strongly opposes any attempts to undermine the institutional position of the Council within the United Nations system.

The European Union welcomes the central role played by the Human Rights Council in addressing human rights situations throughout the world. The severe consequences of the crisis in Syria and the violations committed by all parties, particularly the Syrian regime and its allies, cannot be ignored by any State. Any breaches of international law, in particular international humanitarian law and human rights law, some of which may constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity, must be brought to justice. In this context, the Council's ongoing response to the crisis remains critically important, as demonstrated by efforts to foster accountability and fight against impunity.

The European Union welcomes the decision reached by consensus during the last session of the Human Rights Council to request the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a group of eminent international and regional experts to monitor and report on the human rights situation in Yemen, carry out a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and other appropriate and applicable fields of international law committed by all parties to the conflict, establish the facts and circumstances surrounding the alleged violations and abuses and, where possible, identify those responsible. We call on all parties to cooperate fully with the new investigative mechanism for Yemen.

During the past year, the Human Rights Council has also demonstrated its commitment to promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, and to providing technical assistance and capacity-building to promote human rights to the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti and Mali. Furthermore, we welcome the continued support that has been rendered to the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, the Republic of Guinea, Georgia, Libya and Ukraine. We trust that the Council will continue to closely monitor situations where technical assistance and capacity-building can make a difference and take action where necessary.

Civil society and human rights defenders play a crucial role in the work of the Council and its mechanisms, as provided for in the 2007 institution-building package. Targeting individuals or groups that engage with United Nations human rights mechanisms is deplorable and runs contrary to the promotion and protection of human rights. The EU strongly condemns any act of violence, harassment, intimidation, reprisal or threat thereof. The ability of individuals and groups to raise concerns with special procedures without fear is vital for the work of these mechanisms and their capacity to fulfil their mandates.

The issue of reprisals needs a consistent approach at the international and regional levels; we must do our utmost to prevent and eliminate such acts. Civil society and its representatives are valuable partners for human right mechanisms and the protection and promotion of human rights. We therefore welcome the work done by Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, in the role designated by the Secretary-General to receive, consider and respond to allegations of intimidation and reprisals against those seeking to cooperate with the United Nations and its mechanisms. The EU will continue to support their engagement with the Council and the human rights mechanisms.

On 16 October, the General Assembly elected 15 new members of the Council (see A/72/PV.31). Serving as a Council member entails important responsibilities. Resolution 60/251 provides that members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council. While we congratulate the new members, we also remind them to pay careful attention to the human rights situations in their own countries and to cooperate with the Council mechanisms in the promotion and protection of the human rights of all, without discrimination of any kind. No State has a perfect human rights record, and we therefore encourage the newly elected members to engage in the work of the Council in a spirit of self-reflection, with a view to the improvement of our own human rights situation and to address all human rights concerns that come before the Council on the basis of their merits.

We also strongly encourage all States and other stakeholders to cooperate with the special procedures

as a means to enhance the protection and promotion of human rights. We take this opportunity to call on all States that have not yet done so to extend a standing invitation to all special procedures.

We welcome the fact that the Human Rights Council is seized of the serious human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and underline the importance of the mechanism established on accountability concerning events in the Kasai regions. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fully cooperate with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the international expert group in this regard.

Membership of the Council increases the responsibilities of the holder to cooperate with Council mechanisms and adhere to international norms and obligations. The EU welcomes the renewal of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and calls on the Government of Burundi, as a member of the Council, to cooperate fully with the Commission of Inquiry as well as with other international human rights mechanisms. As stated in the Council's founding resolution, members of the Human Rights Council should uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, both domestically and internationally, and we reiterate our urgent call on the Government of Burundi to do so.

The EU welcomes the creation of an independent international fact-finding mission to establish the facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violations and abuses by military and security forces and abuses in Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine state, with a view to ensuring full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims. The EU takes the opportunity to call once again on the Government of Myanmar to cooperate with this mission.

We also welcome the extensions of the country-specific mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on the situations of human rights in Myanmar, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea and Belarus and the extension of the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan. In this regard, it is important to recall the special session held in December 2016 following allegations of ethnic cleansing, including claims of sexual violence of an unprecedented severity and scale.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our continued commitment to the work of the Human Rights Council and to further strengthening the Council's role in the protection and promotion of human rights, the development of international human rights law and in the prevention of human rights violations and abuses. We will continue to systematically uphold and ensure the implementation of existing international norms and standards, and at all times strongly defend the universality, indivisibility, interdependency, inalienability and interrelated character of human rights.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to express once again Qatar's indignation at and condemnation of the act of terrorism perpetrated in New York. We express our most sincere sympathy to the victims and to the Government and the people of the United States, and we trust that the injured will recover rapidly. We wish to state that Qatar stands with the United States and supports all steps taken to safeguard peace and stability.

I would like to say that we greatly appreciate the words of Ambassador Maza Martelli, President of the Human Rights Council. We thank him for his work, which has been described in the comprehensive and noteworthy report (A/72/53 and A/72/53/Add.1). Qatar continues to participate in the work of the Human Rights Council as a member. We have been elected once again for the new 2018-2020 term, and we are determined to continue our effective work in the Council to promote fundamental rights and freedoms.

We pay tribute to the work being done by the Council in accordance with the principles of neutrality, objectivity and impartiality. We shall continue to cooperate with members of the Council in order to enable the Council to execute its mandate pursuant to those principles.

Qatar plays its role in striving to fulfil the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations with respect to the protection of human rights, the maintenance of international peace and security and the achievement of development. My country incorporates those concepts in its policies and in its Constitution, seeking to strengthen human rights and fundamental freedoms while ensuring respect for such rights and the protection of all. We achieve that end by means of our national institutions, which effectively contribute to the implementation of Government policy for the promotion and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We cooperate with other States and with United Nations mechanisms on the basis of our open-door policy to welcome those holding mandates related to human rights. The Qatar National Vision 2030 is therefore founded on the strategic approach that human rights are fundamental to education, health care, the environment, workers' rights, the empowerment of women and the rights of the child, of those with special needs and of the elderly. Vesting its trust in international cooperation on human rights, Qatar welcomes the establishment of the United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region on 12 February 2006, pursuant to resolution 60/153. The Centre plays an important role and is respected by the United Nations and other relevant institutions.

The report of the Human Rights Council submitted to the General Assembly reflects the difficult situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. Establishing peace in the Middle East must involve respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. The relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council must also be observed. The report of the Human Rights Council also mentions the serious deterioration of the human rights situation in Syria and the serious and systematic violations being committed on a large scale. The Syrian people must be protected and the ceasefire must continue.

As we believe in the primacy of law and the principles of justice and human dignity, and since we are fully aware of the importance of human rights to the stability and prosperity of societies, we have been careful to adopt a consistent approach in order to promote human rights in cooperation with institutions of States Members of the United Nations. Qatar has made major strides nationally, regionally and internationally in that regard. However, we still face illegal and unilateral measures against my country, which constitute a serious violation of human rights owing to their negative consequences, as established by the National Human Rights Committee in Qatar, in the areas of education, health care, the dispersal of families and restrictions on freedom of movement and residence.

Given those negative effects on human rights, the international community must ensure that international law is observed by preventing the imposition on States of policies that seek to flout international human rights standards. Such policies adopted against a State such as ours, which plays a pivotal role in implementing the objectives of the United Nations, undermine international efforts to promote human rights.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support for the promotion of human rights in an impartial and objective way and our cooperation with international organizations such as the United Nations, the Human Rights Council and other specialized bodies.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and my own country, Australia.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the Human Rights Council as the pre-eminent United Nations forum for consideration, discussion and action on human rights. At this time of increasing polarization, populism and fundamentalism, it is crucial that States Members of the United Nations safeguard the integrity of the Human Rights Council.

The Council plays a crucial role in highlighting deteriorating human rights situations and in calling on States to uphold their responsibility to protect their populations and their obligations to respect and to ensure human rights. The Council provides the most appropriate forum to affirm that international human rights apply equally to all people regardless of their race, religion, creed, disability, sexuality or gender identity, including online. Without the Council, the international human rights discourse would be poorer, human rights violations would go unrecorded and the voiceless would remain so.

We underscore the importance of the Council's direct reporting relationship with the plenary of the General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 65/281. We call upon Member States to join us in acknowledging and in respecting the separate mandate of the Human Rights Council.

We also take this opportunity to emphasize that members of the Human Rights Council should uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, as mandated by resolution 60/251. No State has all the answers when it comes to the protection and promotion of human rights. There is room for us all to improve our records and the situations faced by our citizens. However, the tolerance of, acquiescence to or the commission of gross and systemic violations

is always reprehensible. Such behaviour should not be accepted or condoned by members of the Human Rights Council. Being a member of the Council is a privilege that allows States to drive the global human rights agenda. Our countries support the ongoing discussion about how the Human Rights Council could be reformed to secure its continued status as a respected advocate for human rights.

In our national capacity, we would like to note that Australia was recently elected to the Human Rights Council for the 2018-2020 term. As a member, Australia will take a pragmatic and principled approach to the Council and continue to defend human rights both at home and abroad. We will not shy away from difficult issues in our own human rights record, and we will strongly encourage other Council members to do the same. Our membership term will be characterized by consultations with civil society, national human rights institutions and human rights defenders.

Our seven countries are deeply concerned by the increasing hostility to civil society and human rights defenders, both online and offline. Without these key actors, the Human Rights Council would have little to no visibility of the lived experiences of individual rights-holders in any country. We reject reprisals against any person cooperating or seeking to cooperate with the United Nations human rights mechanisms or agencies outright, including when these reprisals arise out of participation in the Human Rights Council, contributions to its Universal Periodic Review or engagement with the Council's special-procedures mandates.

We are also deeply concerned by the harassment, intimidation and obstruction shown by States to special-procedures mandate-holders. While special procedures must be even-handed and fair and operate in line with their mandates, a mandate-holder is an independent voice. It is the mandate-holder's job to shine a spotlight on human rights abuses and violations, research and report on worrying trends, encourage new norms and share expertise and best practices with the global community. We therefore call upon all States to work constructively with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, grant access where required, consider their recommendations in good faith and engage respectfully, even when common ground is difficult to find. All of our countries benefit from the scrutiny that the special procedures bring to bear.

As we look towards the future, our nations believe that, if the Human Rights Council is going to remain effective, it must emphasize diversity and inclusion. It is not sufficient that human rights be enjoyed by members of majority groups but not minorities, by men but not women, or by adults but not children, adolescents or older persons. We have the tools in our hands, including the Council and the existing body of human rights treaties, to ensure that no one is left behind. We must focus on ensuring that human rights protections are enacted for all equally. That must include ensuring that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons enjoy equal protection of their rights and freedom from violence and discrimination; that people with disabilities are empowered to participate equally as contributors, leaders and decision-makers; and that the rights of indigenous peoples are respected and upheld. We must reject cultural relativism, calls for collective rights to trump individual rights, and arguments that sovereignty should obviate the need for international scrutiny.

We urge States to look back at and consistently apply the agreed language in core international human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, and to look forward and use the resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee to ensure that human rights protections are inclusive and embrace our global diversity.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Given the breadth of its thematic activities and its responsiveness to human rights emergencies, as the report presented by the President of the Human Rights Council (A/72/53 and A/72/53/Add.1) illustrates, the Council is living up to its role as the central and permanent human rights body of the Organization. Since its creation, it has established itself as an authoritative voice in the promotion and protection of human rights, including through the truly Universal Periodic Review process, its body of special procedures and its close engagement with human rights defenders.

The review of the Human Rights Council in 2011 confirmed the generally positive perception of the Council among the membership. We collectively refrained from an institutional overhaul and, instead, used the opportunity to strengthen the Council's institutional standing in relation to the General Assembly and its Third Committee. A large majority of the Council's decisions are taken autonomously and

immediately implemented. But the Council also reports to the plenary of the General Assembly and feeds its recommendations into the dedicated General Assembly Committees, namely, the Third and Fifth Committees. We believe that such finely calibrated compromise has served both the Council and the Assembly well.

We also see room for improvement in a number of areas. As pointed out by others, not all provisions of the Council's founding resolution 60/251 have been implemented in practice. The resolution stipulates that Council members shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights, which has been a political commitment for the General Assembly membership. We as States have to live up to that responsibility when electing the membership of the Council. We call upon States to publicly renew this commitment and adapt their election practices accordingly, as a contribution to strengthening the Council in its mission and its daily work.

We also support calls for greater efficiency and effectiveness in the work and functioning of the Council. Its efficiency and impact on the ground can certainly benefit from a review of its working methods and a resetting of priorities. We welcome the effort undertaken in the framework of the Council itself in Geneva, which can and should build on experience and best practices from the entire United Nations system.

We welcome the resolution adopted by the Council on the human rights situation in Myanmar, and in particular the decision to dispatch an independent, international fact-finding mission in order to establish the facts and circumstances of alleged human rights violations, especially in Rakhine state. The setting up of that mission is an important step towards ensuring both full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims. Events since have illustrated that more and urgent action is needed, lest that decision prove to be too little, too late.

We also welcome the resolution adopted by the Council on the situation in Yemen, and in particular the overdue establishment of an international, independent investigative body to carry out comprehensive, impartial and transparent investigations of atrocities and violations of international law. With that decision, the Council has finally shown its readiness to address the urgent situation in Yemen and has sent a clear signal for the need for accountability.

Our commitment to the protection of human rights begins at the national level. The most significant recent measure is the creation in Liechtenstein of an independent national human rights institution, in accordance with the Paris Principles. We have therefore implemented the long-standing recommendations of various international human rights bodies.

Our national human rights institution is being independently developed by civil society, without the involvement of the Government, while receiving funding from the State. Its responsibilities include advising public authorities and private parties on human rights issues, supporting victims of human rights violations, informing the public about the situation of human rights in the country, carrying out investigations, recommending measures to be taken, preparing comments on draft laws and ordinances and the ratification of international agreements, as well as promoting dialogue with national and international bodies. We are convinced that this new institution adds value to the protection of human rights and therefore further strengthens the high standards implicit in the concept of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Lal (India): We welcome the President of the Human Rights Council, Mr. Maza Martelli, and thank him for his detailed statement.

The Human Rights Council plays an important role in furthering our common cause of the promotion and protection of human rights for all. Even as the Human Rights Council has sought to overcome the challenges faced by its earlier avatar, its work has not been smooth and, regrettably, often proves to be contentious. The reasons for many of the difficulties surrounding the discussions on the human rights agenda are not hard to find: divergent priorities and concerns stem primarily from the very wide range of situations that exist in terms, for example, of member States' levels of development, social and cultural contexts and governance systems.

At the same time, the palette of human rights also represents an entire range of aspects, from civil and political, to economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. The question of whether collective rights should be given priority over individual rights is sometimes debated. Agreeing on the right way to promote and protect human rights, including in situations of possible gross violations, is also difficult if it clashes with the idea of the sovereignty of States.

Therefore, while the global discourse on human rights has continued to evolve, fundamental contradictions remain. The relative prioritization of the individual over the State, national sovereignty over international norms and a universal over a culture-specific approach evoke differing opinions. Constraints on national capacities to implement certain rights, instances of the politicization of human rights issues as a foreign policy tool and perceived intrusiveness beyond mandated activities remain areas of contention. While the international community has developed extensive institutional mechanisms and normative frameworks encompassing various aspects of human rights, there are also continuing calls for reform of some of these mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council itself.

The momentum to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development and to prevent the gross violation of human rights in armed conflicts and terrorist attacks around the world over the past two decades has informed recent debates on human rights. This is witnessed in the somewhat contradictory approaches inherent in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on the one hand, and the moves towards external action to prevent violations and abuses and protect civilians, on the other hand. Emerging technologies ranging from cyber- to genetic engineering to artificial intelligence will also soon inform such debates in view of their uneven impact on peoples' lives and rights.

The work of the Human Rights Council continues to expand. This is reflected in the large number of resolutions and decisions being adopted on a range of issues and the greater frequency of meetings and the holding of special sessions. The effectiveness of its work, however, is not always clear. There is a proliferation of special procedures on both thematic and country-specific situations. The work of the special procedures is often constrained by a lack of adequate funds, and the opacity of funding is also an area of concern. There is the problem of certain special procedures clearly exceeding their mandates. A more balanced representation in the staffing of institutions, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), would add to their effectiveness. Further, the country-specific special procedures have largely been counterproductive, and the Council's role in providing technical capacity-building has been limited to only a few situations.

In that context, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism counts as a significant success over the past decade of the Human Rights Council. Every Member State has presented its report at least once. Also, significantly, a number of specific recommendations emerging from this very interactive and constructive exercise have been implemented by a number of Member States in their domestic contexts. These are concrete instances of change occurring as a result of our collective work.

This year, India presented the Universal Periodic Review of its human rights record — its third in fewer than 10 years — at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Also this year, India presented its voluntary national review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda at United Nations Headquarters. Both these voluntary and State-driven processes elicited wide interest and engagement. A similar voluntary aspect is behind the success of the climate-action contributions put forward by the parties to the landmark Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Each of the foregoing is an instance of constructive and collaborative engagement for shaping a better collective future. We believe that this cooperative spirit, rather than counterproductive and often politicized naming and shaming, is essential to enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights globally.

India has engaged actively at the Human Rights Council. It recognizes the primacy of national responsibility and efforts aimed at realizing human rights. The promotion and protection of human rights should be addressed in a fair and equal manner, with, as the guiding principles, objectivity, respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, non-selectivity and transparency.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that all State parties must make every effort to fulfil their treaty obligations. The approach of the Human Rights Council, treaty bodies, special procedures and OHCHR should not be confrontational; rather, it should focus on achieving the desired results through dialogue and capacity-building.

Ms. Alsabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Maza Martelli, President of the Human Rights Council, who is with us in this Hall today. I also welcome the efforts that have been made during his presidency and

thank him for the comprehensive report (A/72/53) he presented at the start of today's meeting.

My delegation familiarized itself with the report and its addendum, as well as the ideas they contain, which cover the special session of the Human Rights Council and the thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth ordinary sessions of the Council, as well as resolutions, decisions and President's statements that are relevant to the discussion.

Kuwait is mindful of the challenges that are being encountered by the United Nations and its bodies, in particular the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in the area of promoting and protecting human rights. These bodies are working so that all peoples of the world may enjoy human rights pursuant to, first, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular, paragraph 3 of Article 1 thereof, which sets forth as one of the main purposes of the United Nations to "promot[e] and encourag[e] respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion"; secondly, States' commitments under international law; and, thirdly, the aspirations of States to create a world where development is sustainable and countries are secure, safe and stable.

In discussing the importance of enhancing cooperation among the States Members of the United Nations and the Organization itself, including the relevant United Nations human rights bodies, we would like to review cooperation between Kuwait and those United Nations bodies. We note the successful visit in February of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. He was made aware of national measures that we have taken in favour of human rights. In particular, he noted the human rights law that we adopted on the rights of families and minors, as well as other human rights legislation.

Kuwait has also hosted Special Rapporteurs within the context of special procedures and mandates. In December 2016 and September 2017, we hosted the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law also visited. We are hoping to host visits from the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities and the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context. We hope to receive greater cooperation from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and its staff. We hope that the international community will provide greater assistance and support to the High Commissioner in this regard, so that our human rights situation may be strengthened and become more universally acceptable.

It is unfortunate to see ongoing flagrant violations of human rights in various parts of the world. It is a complex challenge that the international community must address with wisdom and care. We deeply regret the many challenges in our region resulting from numerous conflicts that are affecting our brotherly peoples, who have been scattered and weakened. We firmly believe that the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel is a flagrant violation of the human rights of the unarmed Palestinian people and contravenes international law and international humanitarian law, as well as all relevant Security Council resolutions. We also express our regret and concern with respect to the violations of the rights of the Rohingya population in Myanmar, especially their right to life.

Finally, my delegation would like to reaffirm the importance of strengthening and protecting respect for human rights. Peace is a human right in itself. Since human rights are always evolving, we should strive to do more to guarantee that they are complied with and that people have access to them. Rules and rights, at both the national and international levels, need to adapt to and remain consistent with a world in constant change.

Ms. Shilo (Israel): Human rights are not reserved for a select few. Human rights belong to all humans because they are human.

Next year, we will mark the seventieth year since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which means that it has been 70 years since the world was offered a chance for a brighter future, based on universally recognized rights. Next year also marks the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. In 1948, Israel committed itself to promoting, protecting and respecting human rights for all. It is a commitment that remains central to Israel's democracy today. Our Declaration of Independence makes the following pledge. Israel will

> "foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants ... irrespective of religion, race and sex".

Israel is committed to achieving gender equality and empowering women. Substantial Government legislation aims to reach those goals by facilitating mobility for women in the workplace, helping more women in Israel become chief executive officers, diplomats, high-ranking military leaders and Nobel Prize laureates. We are also working hard to make a difference on a global scale. Earlier this year, Israel introduced the first-ever United Nations resolution adopted by consensus on the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, civil society plays an essential role in Israel, where its vibrant involvement is a cornerstone of our nation's culture.

I would be remiss if I did not address the dismal and hypocritical situation of the Human Rights Council. Baseless accusations and dozens of biased resolutions of the Council under agenda item 7 have become part of a global campaign to delegitimize and demonize the State of Israel. This must change if we truly want to promote and protect human rights. The High Commissioner himself referred in early September to the hypocrisy that exists in the work of the Human Rights Council, when he said that "selectivity becomes a poison that eats away at the credibility of this body".

Israel has reiterated that fact time and time again. However, agenda item 7 remains and, with it, the singling out of one State — the State of Israel. And while this happens, the world's worst human rights violators avoid scrutiny. Some of them are even members of the Council and are therefore entrusted with the protection of human rights for the entire world. Israel has called, still calls and will continue to call for reform of the Human Rights Council that finally erases the discriminatory practices targeting our country.

When Mr. Elie Wiesel accepted his Nobel Peace Prize, he noted that human rights were being violated on every continent and that there were more oppressed people in the world than there were free people. He simply asked how one could not be sensitive to their plight. We must ask ourselves a similar question. What are we doing to promote, protect and respect the human rights of all people? It will take our combined efforts to fulfil the noble aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The struggle for human rights is an ongoing battle, and it is a battle that we must win.

Ms. Velichko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): As a founding State Member of the United Nations, Belarus has always been and will remain an ethical and responsible participant in discharging its international commitments, including in the field of human rights. The establishment of the Human Rights Council is an important historical chapter in the work of the United Nations. The Council has been in existence for 11 years, which is enough time to allow us to draw conclusions about the work it has accomplished. Undoubtedly, a significant achievement of the Council is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which plays the role of an impartial monitoring mechanism on the human rights situation in all countries, without exception. It is through the UPR that we designed the dialogue with States.

At the same time, the Human Rights Council has been unable to rid itself of the flaws of the Commission on Human Rights, which it replaced. Unfortunately, the Human Rights Council has been constantly burdening its agenda with confrontational decisions related to politicized approaches to human rights. An example of this would be, most of all, the country-specific resolutions, whose selectivity and political motives destroy the basic principles under which the Human Rights Council and the entire United Nations should be operating.

We cannot help but be concerned at the fact that Member States do not seek to negotiate or reach consensus when making decisions in the Human Rights Council. As a result, a significant number of Council resolutions are adopted by vote, and many of the decisions represent a false consensus, since States subsequently dissociate themselves from adopted decisions. These decisions then cause disputes among Member States in the General Assembly. For some reason, it seems better to allocate considerable resources from the United Nations regular budget, which is derived from mandatory contributions from all States Members of the United Nations, to the implementation of non-consensual decisions than to support decisions aimed at addressing the real needs of States, which calls into question the legitimacy of the financing for these decisions.

We should take note of one more alarming trend that is increasing the costs of the Council's activities. This year's report of the Council to the General Assembly (A/72/53) demonstrates an ongoing trend towards increasing its workload in relation to the implementation of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council. We consider it unacceptable to expand the agenda of the Human Rights Council. In this context,

we have seen some inappropriate ideas emerging on extending the duration of the Council's sessions. We suggest, in contrast, that the Council take a serious look at this approach to the work and refrain from duplicating the decisions of the General Assembly and promoting divisive resolutions.

We would like to emphasize that until States stop manipulating human rights for their political and narrow national interests, the Human Rights Council will not be able to have a constructive impact on real human rights situations on the ground. Instead of pursuing ineffective and costly country-specific procedures and commissions of inquiry, the Human Rights Council should encourage the cooperation of States with all relevant United Nations bodies in the field of human rights. An increasing number of States are following the example of Belarus by adopting comprehensive plans aimed at implementing the recommendations of the UPR of the Human Rights Council. Such practices should be adhered to and encouraged in all countries, without exception, regardless of their level of development or human rights situation.

Mr. Sukhee (Mongolia): At the outset, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the President of the Human Rights Council for his leadership and for presenting the report of the Council (A/72/53) today.

Mongolia commends the outcomes of the Council's work in the areas of the human rights of women, children and persons with disabilities, the abolition of the death penalty, trafficking in humans, racial discrimination, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and association, and human rights defenders, all of which reflect the priorities set out in our voluntary pledges. During the reporting period, the Human Rights Council has made important strides, including in the creation of the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development.

Human rights are vital for ensuring peace and security. In this regard, the role of the Council is particularly critical in conflict-affected areas where situations of human rights and freedoms have deteriorated and where there have been serious violations of the norms of international human rights law.

As Mongolia is currently serving the second year of its membership of the Council, it is committed to continuing to contribute to the full implementation of its mandate. One of the major achievements of the Human Rights Council is indisputably the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which is an effective mechanism for assessing the human rights situations of all States Members of the United Nations. We commend the successful conclusion of the second cycle of the UPR. With respect to its third cycle, we align ourselves with many other Member States in the belief that it should focus more on implementing the recommendations of the previous cycles. Accordingly, technical assistance and capacity-building are vital.

We also consider the special-procedures mandate-holders as an integral part of the Human Rights Council and fully acknowledge their contribution to the effective promotion and protection of the human rights of all persons. In September 2017, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, dedicated to monitoring compliance with obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, visited Mongolia, as did the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

In our view, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights needs greater financial and human resources so as to be able to respond to and address human rights violations and facilitate capacity-building for Member States. There should also be more resources available for the effective implementation of the relevant recommendations. We believe that the Council needs to step up its action on the correlation between business and human rights, although this issue has only recently come to the fore of the global human rights agenda. The Human Rights Council should give greater attention to the situations where human rights are seriously jeopardized within or by private business entities. In this sense, Member States should constructively enhance their partnership and engagement with the private sector. As for the Government of Mongolia, we have shown our commitment by inviting a member of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises to visit our country in 2012.

We would also take this opportunity to commend the initiative of and work undertaken by the President of the Council to move the discussion with Council members forward with an view to improving the Council's working methods and enhancing its overall efficiency. Indeed, we believe that the Council's efficiency could be further improved. Mongolia stands ready to offer its

support for initiatives aimed at improving the working methods of the Council in a manner that is beneficial to all States and other stakeholders.

Mr. Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken note of the report of the Human Rights Council (A/72/53), and the statement made by Mr. Maza Martelli, President of the Human Rights Council, for which we thank him.

Iran reaffirms its support for the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office in fulfilling the mandate set forth in resolution 48/141. Iran also wishes to reiterate its firm commitment to an open, inclusive and constructive dialogue among Member States on all human rights issues in the framework of the Human Rights Council and its founding resolution 60/251.

Unfortunately, the Council has yet to be fully utilized as a medium for dialogue and cooperation. Rather, in many instances, the Council has been exploited for mere political purposes through the use of confrontational and selective approaches. Politicization and manipulation have increased mistrust and eroded the effectiveness of the Council and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism.

The rationale behind the UPR mechanism was to ensure universality, objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality in the work of the Council. It is therefore unfortunate that a few countries still prefer to revert to the dysfunctional practice of the Commission on Human Rights and table country-specific resolutions that have no value and encourage confrontation rather than cooperation in the Council. Accordingly, it should not come as a surprise that the Council is finding itself on the same path that led to the demise of the Commission on Human Rights.

The report of the Council includes, as a product of the unconstructive attempts of a few countries, a reference to a resolution that was adopted against my country. Bearing in mind all the facts on the ground, as well as the continuous cooperation of my country with various human rights mechanisms, in particular the UPR, the resolution, its ensuing reports and the appointment of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran are definitely misplaced, unwarranted and objectionable. The resolution is one of those instances that exposes the shortcomings of the Council and is nothing but a waste of limited resources that otherwise could be utilized for the meaningful promotion and protection of human rights.

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran dissociates itself from the part of the Human Rights Council's report that includes the so-called resolution on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the meantime, we also reiterate our principled position of non-recognition of and non-cooperation with the mandates that are created by the Council outside of the sphere of internationally recognized human rights.

In conclusion, the Islamic Republic of Iran would like to underscore the important role of the Human Rights Council in confronting and addressing vicious waves of racism, bigotry, violent extremism and terrorism. The Human Rights Council has a role to play in raising global awareness of the imminent threat of terrorism and the mindsets behind it. The world should be warned of the speedy mobility of the evil forces of violent extremism and terrorism, and, more importantly, supporters of these menaces, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, should be cautioned that the boomerang they have thrown at others will sooner or later hit them when it returns.

Mr. Lukiantsev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is of the view that the Human Rights Council should scrupulously follow the norms of international law and the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity in its work so as to promote and defend human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction.

We must note that in the work of the Human Rights Council, politicization and confrontation are gaining steam. The Council is steadily evolving from an international platform for conducting mutually respectful dialogue on current human rights issues into an arena for some countries to settle their political scores. This alarming trend is expressed not only in increased attention to country-specific topics but in increasingly polarized discussions on agenda items that used to be carried out in a constructive and neutral manner. Even the thematic agenda items of the Council are increasingly being used by countries to make politically motivated demands of one another.

The Russian position remains unchanged. There are no countries in the world free of human rights violations. In this regard, we believe that it is completely unacceptable for States to have policies that include

mentoring, defaming or labelling, although many States do. They discredit the very idea of cooperation to promote and protect human rights and the work of United Nations human rights bodies. Nor is the Council's effectiveness increased when the work of its special procedures regularly not only exceeds mandates and duplicates each other's work but also suffers from a high degree of political bias, thus contradicting the code of conduct of the special procedures.

Unfortunately, the seemingly most neutral agenda item of the Council — agenda item 10, on technical assistance and capacity-building — has not avoided politicization. The desire of some States with respect to that agenda item is to achieve their own short-term political objectives having to do, in particular, with defining the national legal status of territories. This undermines the major principles of technical assistance for the promotion and protection of human rights: non-confrontation and depoliticization. It inserts an added element of division into the work of the Council. In this context, we confirm our position that is unacceptable to use the United Nations human rights bodies to raise issues outside these bodies' jurisdiction.

We cannot agree with the approach of a number of countries linking the provision of technical assistance to States with the prevention of human rights violations. In our view, it is the practical assistance to States and helping them to build their institutional capacity-building for human rights that would be a major tool for prevention of these very violations. The initiatives of some States to attempt to give functions outside the Council to the Council to review principles and methods of work, establish new institutional formats and erode the intergovernmental nature of this body, have a destructive impact on the Council's operations. The parameters of the work of the Council are set forth in resolution 60/251, and any changes to the work of the Council should be discussed in an intergovernmental format and adopted on the basis of a broad consensus.

Dialogue in the Council will also be stunted if we impose aggressive standards characteristic of one group of countries on all others as if they represented a global standard, or if we enshrine narrow interpretations of international human rights norms as if they were universal norms. We are convinced that such gambits will only increase politicization and confrontation in the work of the Council and other United Nations human rights bodies.

Past sessions have shown that the Council continues to intrude on the jurisdiction of other United Nations bodies. We call for maintaining the division of labour of the United Nations bodies and mechanisms, as set forth by the Charter. We are of the view that the integration of human rights issues into all spheres of the work of the United Nations must have its limits and should not lead to a duplication of the work of United Nations agencies and bodies.

We are convinced that the major principle of the work of the Council and, in fact, of the entire United Nations human rights apparatus should be equal cooperation based on respect for sovereignty and the sovereign equality of States in strict compliance with procedural norms. We call on all countries to follow this principle and refrain from the use of double standards and their own narrow political concerns. Only then can we counteract further politicization and confrontation in the work of the Human Rights Council.

Mrs. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina wishes to warmly thank His Excellency Mr. Maza Martelli, President of the Human Rights Council, for being with us today in the General Assembly and welcomes his report (A/72/53) on the activities of the Council over the past year.

First of all, Argentina believes that seamless coordination between New York and Geneva is relevant for the human rights agenda, which is why we welcome the opportunity to address the recent work of the Human Rights Council in the General Assembly. Argentina has always been, and will continue to be, a strong advocate for the independence, work and achievements of the Human Rights Council in the promotion, respect and protection of human rights. We firmly believe that the Council should stand on an equal footing with the main organs of the United Nations.

Argentina wishes to take this opportunity to emphasize the role of the Human Rights Council in raising the profile of human rights throughout the world. The creation of the Council has made it possible to increase dialogue and the different channels of cooperation among States in the promotion of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons, with their consequent contributions to development and international peace and security.

In addition, Argentina is pleased with the recent renewal of the mandate of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances through

Council resolution 36/6, of 28 September 2017. In this regard, Argentina calls on all States to strengthen cooperation with the special procedures and treaty bodies of the Council, answering all requests, presenting outstanding reports and ensuring that standing invitations are issued.

In that regard, in the past year Argentina hosted the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Next year, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment will visit Argentina.

Without respect for the existing institutions and mandates of United Nations organs, it will be extremely hard to meet the expectations of our peoples in terms of ensuring the defence and protection of human rights. Therefore, all Member States must undertake to respect the independence and integrity of the mandate of the Human Rights Council, in accordance with resolution 60/251 and other relevant resolutions.

Finally, Argentina would like to welcome the newly elected countries to the Council, and we reiterate our unwavering commitment to defending the independence and work of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the presence today of Ambassador Joaquín Maza Martelli, President of the Human Rights Council — a proud Salvadoran and a personal mentor of mine — and thank him for his briefing. We commend him on his hard work this year at the helm of such an important intergovernmental forum. We welcome the report (A/72/53), which we trust will be adopted in its entirety in due course by the General Assembly.

The Human Rights Council, which is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, is the principal intergovernmental body of the United Nations responsible for ensuring human rights, with its own jurisdiction over debates on all thematic issues related to human rights. In this regard, we wish to reiterate that in both this plenary and the Third Committee, the procedures, mechanisms, structures and competencies that form the basis of the Human Rights Council's work must be respected, given that they have all been authorized by the General Assembly. Its primordial task is reflected not just in the diversity of the Council's agenda, but also in its resolutions, the full participation of Member States in the Universal Periodic Review and the broad participation and involvement of civil society in all discussions in Geneva.

For El Salvador, as an active member of the Human Rights Council since 2015, when we began our first term as a member of the Council, the respect and promotion of human rights is a State policy and a fundamental pillar of Salvadoran foreign policy. In recent years, we have made major progress in this field with processes that promote respect for the human person as such. Similarly, we have become engaged in international processes whereby we have become aware of the importance of organizing and promoting the full enjoyment of rights. My delegation has addressed these issues and detailed some of our experiences within each of the substantive agenda items, both in the Third Committee in New York and in Council sessions in Geneva, where we have participated in our national capacity.

We therefore wish to reaffirm that El Salvador is committed to promoting and protecting human rights for everyone without discriminating against anyone. We commend the President of the Human Rights Council for the work done by the Council this year and once again welcome him in New York on this auspicious occasion.

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): I would like to begin by thanking His Excellency Mr. Joaquín Alexander Maza Martelli of El Salvador, President of the Human Rights Council during its eleventh cycle, for the exemplary manner in which he and his Bureau have steered the work of the Council this year. I also express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and his Office, for their continued efforts to constructively engage with all nations in the promotion and protection of human rights across the globe.

The Human Rights Council is the institutional expression of the international community's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. When establishing the Council in 2006, the General Assembly made it extremely clear, in resolution 60/251, that the Council's work should be "guided by the principles of universality, objectivity and non-selectivity". The Assembly also

mandated the Council to provide advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building to States "in consultation with and with the consent of Member States concerned". Eleven years later, there is a profound need for the Council to return to its roots and undertake its work in an impartial, objective and non-selective manner, reflect its intergovernmental character and ensure its credibility.

It is that credibility that will enable the Council to inspire international actions in support of protecting the human rights of millions of Syrians who have been besieged, displaced and deprived of their basic right to life and liberty. My delegation condemns not only the gross human rights abuses in Syria, but the international community's acceptance of them. We seem to remain complacent when warring parties attack humanitarian targets, including hospitals, schools, utilities and aid workers; where the use of chemical weapons is now well documented; where terrorists target minorities and the most vulnerable segments of a population; and when all this happens with complete impunity.

The Human Rights Council can also inspire international actions to stop the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian crisis in the State of Palestine. That crisis emerged solely as a result of the illegal and prolonged occupation by Israel, which, as of next year, will mark its seventieth anniversary and which has denied generations of Palestinians many of their fundamental rights.

Another human rights and humanitarian crisis that has not received an adequate response from the Council is the situation facing the Rohingya community in Myanmar. The minority Muslim population is facing gross and systematic violations of its rights, in which gang rape, mass killings and the burning of homes, schools, markets, shops and mosques has become commonplace. The renewal of the fact-finding mission on Myanmar by the Council is a step in the right direction, but that is not enough. The Maldives supports the call for the urgent convening of a special session of the Human Rights Council with the aim of adopting a substantive and clear outcome resolution on ending any further atrocities.

The Human Rights Council will enjoy a greater level of support and cooperation from the broader United Nations membership when the Council is seen to be more inclusive in its working methods and when the universality principle is applied in good faith. The working methods of the Council today are more opaque and less inclusive than those of the General Assembly. As a result, representatives who attend only a single session find themselves at a severe disadvantage, as is the case with many representatives from small island developing States. For instance, inadequate time is provided for informal consultations on most resolutions, and input by non-member States at informal negotiations is often ignored, partially owing to the disproportionate deference afforded States members of the Council.

The Maldives has called for the introduction of specific practical measures to improve the working methods of the Council, including ensuring that draft resolutions are circulated before sessions begin and that the compilation and circulation of all comments made in informal consultations is done in a timely manner, as well as ensuring that every State has the opportunity to comment on the potential effects of any draft resolution prior to its adoption.

The Maldives has had the privilege of serving on the Human Rights Council for two consecutive terms. We are proud of the contributions that we have made to the Council's work and the outcomes that we have facilitated. The Maldives introduced the idea of examining the human rights dimensions of climate change and led the Council's efforts that resulted in the establishment of a mandate on human rights and the environment. The Maldives also had the privilege to introduce, with the support of core groups, draft resolutions on parliaments as promoters of human rights, on the independence of the judiciary, on child and forced marriages, on the freedom of assembly and association, and on prevention, as well as on the establishment of and support for the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council. The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on international justice is also an initiative that we supported. The Maldives is also pleased to be coordinating the work of the Asia-Pacific Group in the Council in 2017.

The Maldives remains committed to strengthening the Council, its working methods and its ability to work with the Governments of Member States in responding to and promoting human rights around the world. The Maldives will always be a committed and enthusiastic partner in efforts to craft shared solutions for our shared destiny.

Ms. Agladze (Georgia): I thank the President of the Human Rights Council for presenting his comprehensive report (A/72/53). Georgia reaffirms its full support for the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms as important instruments in efforts to promote universal respect for the protection of all human rights. During the past decade, the Human Rights Council has become the main body for mobilizing the international community to address and respond to gross human rights violations and abuses worldwide.

We also welcomed the high-level event on Human Rights Council reform, which was held at the current session of the General Assembly in September. Considering the critical humanitarian situation in many parts of the world, we deem it important to seek opportunities to reinforce the effectiveness of the Council based upon lessons learned. In our view, the effective work of the Council strongly depends on universal participation. The voice of each State Member of the United Nations, irrespective of its size, population or strength, must be heard.

With that in mind, Georgia has become the first Eastern European State to contribute to the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Human Rights Council, which supports the participation of small-country delegations in the Council's work. Georgia would like to express its sincere gratitude to the past and current Bureaus of the Council for their efforts to improve the working methods of the Council and to manage its meetings. We believe, however, that additional measures need to be undertaken to that end, leading to further constructive engagement in that process.

Over the years, the Human Rights Council has adopted a number of important thematic and country-specific resolutions. In that regard, let me underline the resolution on cooperation with Georgia, adopted during the thirty-fourth session of the Council, which calls for immediate access to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and international and regional human rights mechanisms for the occupied regions of Georgia. Pursuant to the resolution, the Council considered the issue of Georgia at its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions. Regrettably, no access had been granted at that time to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights or to other United Nations human rights mechanisms. However, the report presented by the High Commissioner during the thirty-sixth session of the Council reflected the serious human rights violations that have been occurring in the occupied territories.

We underline the importance of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as a key element of the Human Rights Council's efforts to assess the human rights situation in every country. Georgia has incorporated the recommendations received during the UPR into its national action plans on human rights. It is of the utmost importance that all Member States engaged in the UPR process adhere to the accepted rules and regulations. Georgia attaches particular importance to the recommendations of the United Nations human rights system and supports steps towards enabling the mechanisms to monitor the level of the implementation of accepted UPR recommendations by Member States.

At the national level, Georgia has established an institution that is mandated to track and coordinate national follow-up and implementation of the aforementioned obligations and recommendations. It is noteworthy that this year Georgia joined the Group of Friends on national implementation, reporting and follow-up within the Human Rights Council, which seeks to take the implementation agenda forward. In our view, effective domestic implementation is the key to advancing human rights on the ground. The implementation gap remains an important issue with regard to Human Rights Council resolutions, and more attention needs to be paid to implementation aspects by Member States.

We highly value the effective participation of civil-society representatives in the work of the Human Rights Council. Further strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations is important for safeguarding the space allotted to civil society and ensuring that their voices are heard. In that context, Georgia strongly rejects any act of intimidation or reprisal directed against individuals and groups that cooperate or have cooperated with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms. In the area of human rights, it is our duty to prevent and ensure adequate protection against such acts.

As we discuss the importance of human rights mechanisms, I would like to underline Georgia's support for the special procedures, which represent another effective tool for addressing specific country and thematic situations. Georgia has extended a standing

invitation to all special-procedures mandate-holders and has hosted several visits by United Nations Special Rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

In conclusion, let me once again reiterate Georgia's strong commitment to joining the international community in strengthening and promoting human rights throughout the world.

Ms. Valiente Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Human Rights Council was established as a result of the need to address the double standards, confrontation and political manipulation that characterized the now-defunct Commission on Human Rights. Those practices, which discredited the Commission — and which we reject in the strongest terms — must be avoided. We reiterate our concern about the tendency to impose selectivity and double standards in the Council when considering human rights situations, as reflected in the report of the Human Rights Council (A/72/53). Political manipulation must cease when the Council deals with country situations. Cooperation and respectful dialogue should guide the work of the Council.

Cuba reaffirms that the Universal Periodic Review was established as the only universal mechanism for the comprehensive analysis of the human rights situations in all countries. It is the Council's main distinctive element compared to the previous Commission on Human Rights. The mechanism has proven to be a means for international cooperation in the field of human rights, based on constructive dialogue and respect for the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity. Those principles must also be respected by the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and the human rights treaty bodies. The special-procedures mandate holders must also observe the code of conduct adopted during the institution-building process of the Human Rights Council.

Cuba believes that as long as an unjust and exclusive international economic and political order persists, the Council must continue to speak out in favour of a democratic and equitable international order. For as long as unilateral coercive measures are imposed and blockades are maintained — such as the one that Cuba has suffered for more than 55 years — the Council must reject those practices and demand that they be ended. The Council must ensure that the claim to the right to international solidarity becomes an imperative if we wish to confront the serious challenges posed by the deep economic, financial, energy, environmental and food crises that affect the whole world today.

We regret that, at the previous session of the Human Rights Council, resolutions that have enjoyed the consensus of the Member States for several years had to be adopted by vote, such as the right to food. At this session of the General Assembly, my delegation will again submit a draft resolution on that topic in the hope that such an important initiative will enjoy the constructive support of all delegations so that we can send a clear message of consensus on such a crucial issue.

Cuba will continue to work on promoting the rights of peoples to self-determination, peace and development and the right to food, the establishment of a democratic and equitable international order, the fight against racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination, the realization of cultural rights and respect for diversity. Cuba affirms its firm commitment to promoting and respecting all human rights for everyone.

Ms. Wagner (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for his report (A/72/53). Switzerland is pleased that the opportunity was taken this year to formulate specific proposals for strengthening the impact and contribution of the Human Rights Council to the protection and promotion of the respect for human rights around the world. Those proposals have served as a basis for identifying priority courses of action that now need to be implemented so as to strengthen the human rights pillar at the United Nations as a whole. Switzerland will continue its engagement in that respect.

First, Switzerland firmly believes that the international community's success in protecting and promoting respect for human rights depends on the better integration of human rights into the United Nations global agenda. The relationship between human rights and peace and security is worthy of special attention, particularly in view of its potential for conflict prevention. It was with that in mind that Switzerland and other Member States launched an appeal on 13 June to put human rights at the heart of Member States' efforts in conflict prevention and, in particular, to enhance the exchange of useful

information between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council. Switzerland invites all Member States to join the 71 countries that have already offered their support to that appeal and to commit to putting it into action.

Secondly, I wish to comment on the space granted to civil society, where we are seeing increasingly serious violations and abuses of the rights to the freedom of expression and the freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Civil society plays a fundamental role in United Nations mechanisms. The greater inclusion and protection of civil society therefore represents an investment in strengthening the impact, efficiency and credibility of the Human Rights Council.

In that regard, Switzerland is concerned about numerous cases of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders and other members of civil society while they exercise their fundamental rights by providing first-hand information to representatives of United Nations mechanisms. Switzerland wishes to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for his commitment to follow up on such cases and urges the international community to reverse that negative trend and take further action to protect those defending human rights — especially those who cooperate with the Council and its mechanisms.

Switzerland feels that the increase in the Council's workload confirms the relevance of its mandate, but does not believe that that workload is sustainable in the medium term. Further reflection is needed on optimizing working methods and implementing the relevant proposals already on the table. At the same time, we believe that it is essential to work on improving the atmosphere at the Human Rights Council and avoid a climate of confrontation. Switzerland calls on all Member States to work constructively on Council matters so as to enhance its credibility and efficiency.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 67?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

United Nations A/72/PV.41

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-second session

41st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 7 November 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 122

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council

The President: I thank all present for being here today to discuss the important issue of Security Council reform. I would like to express my gratitude to Ambassador Imnadze of Georgia and Ambassador Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates for agreeing to serve as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations process. They have both taken on an important responsibility, and I am confident that they will receive members' support in both words and actions. I would also like to sincerely thank the former co-Chairs, Ambassador Jinga of Romania and Ambassador Khiari of Tunisia, for their diligent and valuable work. I would like to make three points in order to frame our discussion today.

First, the reform of the Security Council will not just affect the work that takes place a few doors down from us in the Council Chamber. Rather, it will impact the future of the entire United Nations system. We are hearing more and more calls for the United Nations to change and evolve at a faster pace. Those calls have come from across the world, not just from States Members of the United Nations. In fact, in September, high-level representatives of Member States stood at this rostrum and stressed the need for the United Nations to adapt to a changing world, and many of them even made direct calls for Security Council reform.

We must remember that the Security Council is the organ charged with maintaining international peace and security. Its decisions can mean the difference between life or death. That is why the Security Council often makes international headlines and why its work is seen as one of the major indicators of the United Nations role in the world. Moreover, that is why we must answer those calls for change, in particular in relation to the Security Council. If we do not, the continued relevance and, frankly, the very survival of the United Nations are at stake.

Secondly, in answering those calls, we do not need to look further than this Hall. All of us sitting here today hold the keys to change. The Council was designed in 1945, when the world looked very different from how it looks today. However, there has been only one change in the Council's membership since then, and that came through the expansion in the number of non-permanent members in 1965, more than half a century ago. But the failure to change is not for lack of trying. Next year, the Open-ended Working Group will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of its establishment. We are also approaching our tenth year of intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. However, the time for merely trying is up. Now is the time for action. For our purposes, action means dialogue — real dialogue, real listening, real interaction. Without those elements, the reform process will become nothing but an exercise in reading out statements. It will feature nothing but the repetition of well-known,

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static positions. In that case, what is the incentive for compromise? Where can convergences emerge from? How can we ever move forward?

That brings me to my third point, namely, that we must look to the process ahead. It must be credible. Member States must believe and trust in it. That is why I am committed to transparency and inclusivity. After consultations with the co-Chairs and Member States, we shall start that process as early as possible, and a full calendar will be circulated in advance to Member States to allow for forward planning. I hope that that approach will both enhance the quality of our discussions and facilitate engagement by all delegations. During this session of the General Assembly, the intergovernmental negotiation process must lead to meaningful progress. That is our collective duty. However, how that happens and the pace at which it happens is up to the Assembly. My team and I are here to support the process in any way we can.

I cannot skirt around the issue today; I am compelled to address it head-on. And, in doing so, I need to admit that not all of us see eye to eye on the issue of Security Council reform. In fact, some of us are at opposite ends of the spectrum. However, some of the most difficult negotiations throughout history started out in just that way. In many cases, parties could not even meet in the same room. That means that we are already a step ahead, and we too can come closer to the middle. We too can, day by day, make what may seem like an impossible agreement become possible. We too can make history. We can start through dialogue, and we can start today.

Mr. Sesay (Sierra Leone): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the African Union.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate on agenda item 122, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council". We acknowledge and strongly appreciate your opening remarks, and we wish to reiterate the commitment of the States members of the African Union to this very important issue, in spite of the tremendous difficulties that exist, as you seek to guide and move the process forward. Let me also use this occasion to congratulate you once again, on behalf of the African States, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Let me also congratulate Mr. Kaha Imnadze, Permanent Representative of Georgia, and Mrs. Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, on their appointment as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations. We also express our support and readiness to work with the co-Chairs in building on the gains made so far in the reform process. We also want to thank the previous co-Chairs, Ambassadors Mohamed Khiari and Ion Jinga, the Permanent Representatives of Tunisia and Romania, respectively, for their stewardship of the process during the seventy-first session.

Following the 2005 World Summit and its Outcome, a number of Heads of State and Government, speaking at the general debate of the Assembly this year, continued to reaffirm the need to reform the Security Council in order to make it more broadly representative, democratic, effective, transparent, accessible and legitimate. We must therefore seek to reach an agreement on a reform model that would take into account the core values of the United Nations.

As a group, the African States remains convinced of the need for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations system that upholds the principles, objectives and ideals of the Charter of the United Nations, so as to achieve a fairer world based on universalism, equity and regional balance. To that end, we remain true and faithful to decision 62/557, on the topic before us today, and other relevant General Assembly decisions aimed at a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, while encompassing the five main clusters and taking into account their interconnectedness, as agreed by the Assembly.

It is clear that there is general agreement to reform the Security Council, despite the existence of some disagreement on the exact method for achieving the reform. What is notable, however, is the fact that there has been convergence in the intergovernmental negotiations, including growing support for expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. In fact, that view is shared by a cross-section of the membership of the Assembly, and it is in line with the political commitment made by our leaders in 2005.

Moreover, there is considerable support for the inclusion of small and medium-sized States, and of course enhanced African representation, in an expanded Security Council. As a group, we note that the main

aim of the various groups and stakeholders' positions is to ensure that the Council represents the present global geopolitical realities. That, we believe, will help to ensure the promotion and preservation of the principles of equity and democracy, as well as further enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Security Council.

Since the adoption of decision 62/557, the reform process has, at best, forged ahead cautiously and at a very slow pace. The positions and proposals of the various groups and Member States have been stated and restated during the many exchanges during the various intergovernmental negotiations. Convergences, divergences and possible sticking areas are now very well known. There is no doubt that past exchanges have been interactive and productive. However, actual negotiations have not yet begun. That, I believe, is an appropriate point to review, so as to achieve a meaningful reform process. It is now time to move from rhetoric to action and produce the desired results indicated in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. We therefore hope that the spirit of an effective interactive approach that focuses on a possible negotiating process in a not-too-distant future will dictate the pace of the reform process.

At this stage, a work plan, a timeline for negotiations and the modalities by which agreements could be reached on given issues are of great necessity. That could help set the pace for moving the reform process in a more meaningful direction with a view to driving it towards real negotiations. It is therefore crucial for the entire membership of the Assembly to agree first on the principles and criteria of the negotiations vis-à-vis the five negotiable clusters and their relationship. Accordingly, in seeking progress on the reform process, we must at this stage endeavour to reach an agreement on how to move forward and reconcile the outcomes set out in the various documents produced during the sixty-ninth, seventieth and seventy-first sessions, with a view to forming the basis for the work of the intergovernmental negotiations during this session. What is of critical significance in guiding the reform process is the acknowledgement of the interlinkages among the five negotiable clusters.

We cannot talk about the size of an enlarged Security Council without talking about the categories of membership, since enlargement of the Council in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories will definitely affect its size. Also, the size of an enlarged Council will affect the cluster on equitable regional representation. In other words, in order to correct the current imbalance in the Security Council, we must enlarge its size, which must also take into account the need to redress the protracted historical injustice done to Africa in terms of representation in the Council. That therefore explains the need for a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, as opposed to a piecemeal and/or intermediate procedural reform of the Council.

Considering the present international landscape, it is unacceptable that Africa is the only continent not to be represented in the permanent category of Council membership, while it is also underrepresented in the non-permanent category. We will therefore continue to demand the allocation of no less than two permanent seats to Africa, with all the prerogatives and privileges of the permanent members, and a total of five non-permanent seats. The selection of such representatives will be done by our regional organization, the African Union, which has enviable credentials in selecting its candidates to serve in multilateral organizations, including the United Nations.

That demand, which is a continent-wide aspiration, is aimed at ensuring Africa's right to fair and equitable geographical representation on the Security Council. The need to adhere to that demand and to address the grossly unjust scenario is fundamental. A delay would mean further perpetuating and compounding the existing injustice and, concomitantly, denying the region its rightful place in the major decision-making organ of the Organization. We are therefore pleased that a considerable number of Member States support the enlargement of the Security Council to reflect equitable regional representation.

Our continued participation in this debate is firmly rooted in our commitment to the Common African Position, articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. We remain firmly convinced that the Common African Position continues to enjoy the broadest support of the majority of the membership and that it remains a viable option in the reform process. Africa therefore continues to urge all interest groups and stakeholders and the wider United Nations membership to demonstrate their commitment to correcting the historical injustice by concretely supporting the African position, which will clearly lead to reforming the Council so that it can become a more inclusive, democratic and effective organ.

In conclusion, we keenly look forward to the intergovernmental negotiations during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly. We hope that the session will build upon the progress made so far and will accelerate the pace in attaining concrete gains towards fulfilling the forthright vision of our leaders at the 2005 World Summit. Africa is very much committed to the important issue of reform. We therefore look forward to working with you, Mr. President, and the general membership within the intergovernmental negotiations for a comprehensive reform, as stipulated under Assembly decision 62/557. We will remain open to working alongside and/or together with any other initiative that takes into account the level of commitment and support that the Common African Position has gained so far. We continue to call for more frank debates, which will generate the necessary political will, leading to the much-needed reform of the Security Council in order to better reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

At the outset, I would like to highlight the support of the Arab Group for your efforts, Mr. President, at the helm of the General Assembly during this session. In that regard, our Group welcomes the appointment of Ambassador Kaha Imnadze, Permanent Representative of Georgia, and Ambassador Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiation process on the reform of the Security Council. I cannot fail to commend the efforts of the co-Chairs at the previous session, namely, Ambassador Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Permanent Representative of Tunisia, and Ambassador Ion Jinga, Permanent Representative of Romania. I would like to thank them for having brought the points of views of the groups and countries closer together in the context of those negotiations.

The reform of, and equitable representation in, the Security Council are among the main principles of a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, given the major challenges that the international community faces. Those challenges make us even more determined to step up efforts to strengthen the role of the Security Council so that it can better deal with the challenges it faces in a transparent and credible way. Four years after the start of the negotiations to expand the number of Security Council members and to improve its working methods, during which several initiatives were presented by countries and groups of countries, including the Arab Group, it has become important to move forward with Security Council reform and to seek to achieve consensus-based decisions based on agreement among countries on the principles of change and reform, in particular given the significant changes that have taken place in the world since the United Nations was established in 1945. However, we do not necessarily need to set a timeline that would prevent the finding of a comprehensive solution to reform.

In that regard, the Arab Group reiterates once again that the intergovernmental negotiations within the General Assembly represent the only way to find a solution, in line with decision 62/557, in the five categories of reform, namely, membership, the veto power, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Security Council and the working methods of the Council, and the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly.

The Arab Group also underscores that all of those issues are closely linked. The various negotiations need to take into consideration all those issues in order to achieve comprehensive reform. The Arab Group also wishes to reiterate that restarting the intergovernmental negotiations during the seventy-second session should include all positions and proposals put forward by Member States during the negotiations. There is no doubt whatsoever that such a basis should guide the two co-Chairs as they seek to reopen the negotiations aimed at achieving consensus among Member States and making progress in that regard. The Arab Group reaffirms its position to preserve the consistent position of the Security Council and not to obstruct the intergovernmental negotiations in any way by imposing measures that are not consensus-based.

We face numerous challenges, including the veto power. The arbitrary use of the veto by some Member States has harmed the credibility of decision-making within the Security Council. That has sometimes led to the Security Council being unable to shoulder its responsibilities. The Council has therefore been unable to take the necessary measures to maintain international peace and security. The use of the veto power by permanent members has shown that those countries protect their national interests or the interests of their allies. It is true that, in recent years, the veto power has not been used as often as in previous times. However, it has shown itself to be an effective way to prevent

some countries from shouldering their responsibilities. Over the past 20 years, the veto was used 27 times to protect Israel from the consequences of its practices in the occupied Palestinian territories.

It is crucial that we improve the Security Council's working methods so as to make it more effective and more transparent. At the same time, we need to reach agreement on standing rules of procedure, as the ones we have now are provisional. Similarly, the number of plenary Security Council meetings needs to be increased, thereby strengthening the role of the countries affected by the issues being discussed by the Council. Such meetings would provide concrete opportunities for non-members of the Security Council to participate in its debates. Moreover, the number of closed meetings needs to be reduced and should become the exception rather than the rule. Decisions and statements available to the Council need be made readily accessible. Consultations with countries concerned by the issues being discussed by the Security Council need to be increased in accordance with Article 31 of the Charter of the United Nations. The subsidiary bodies and committees of the Security Council need to make information concerning their work available. Furthermore, the Security Council needs to show greater respect for its mandate.

The position of the Group of Arab States with regard to the reform of the Security Council is well-known, namely, that its member States are asking for permanent Arab representation, as well as proportional representation in the non-permanent member category. Ultimately, the Arab Group is committed to participating constructively in the next round of intergovernmental negotiations with a view to reaching consensus that will allow us to comprehensively and effectively reform the Security Council.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Four: Brazil, Germany, India and my own country, Japan.

I would like to express our sincere appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this important and timely debate. I welcome your intention "to promote a credible process to address the reform of the Security Council", as you mentioned in the general debate in September (*A/72/PV.3, p.6*), as well as this morning. You can count on our full support in making this a credible process. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Kaha Imnadze of Georgia and Ambassador Lana Zaki Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates on their appointment as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations. The Group of Four stands ready to support them in undertaking their important role.

The reform of the Security Council is long overdue. If we truly seek to preserve the credibility of the working of the General Assembly, and indeed of the entire United Nations, there is no more time to lose. That is the first message that I would like to convey to everyone today. To underline the urgency of making real progress, let me just name a few milestones in the long history of efforts to reform the Security Council.

First, in 1979, a request was submitted for the inclusion of an item entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council" on the agenda of the General Assembly. Secondly, this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 47/62, in December 1992, which requested the Secretary-General to invite Member States to submit written comments on that issue. Thirdly, the 2005 World Summit Outcome clearly called on Heads of State and Government to support early reform of the Security Council. Lastly, at the end of the current session, it will have been 10 years since the General Assembly adopted decision 62/557 to initiate the intergovernmental negotiations. Sadly, despite all those efforts, we are still very far from where we should be.

Nonetheless, we were encouraged to hear you say, Sir, upon your election as President of the General Assembly last spring that,

> "[t]here is a high degree of accord that the time is ripe to transform the Security Council into a twenty-first century body" (*A/71/PV.83, p.3*).

The Group of Four fully agrees. The Group will spare no efforts to translate those words into action under your able leadership, Sir, and in cooperation with other Member States.

My second message is the following: text-based negotiations should be initiated immediately. That is precisely the process that we use to translate words into action here in the United Nations. Out of 193 Member States, an overwhelming majority of 164 support beginning text-based negotiations. The Group of Four already underlined that fact in a statement delivered on its behalf by the representative of Germany to the General Assembly last July (see A/71/PV.92). I also appreciate

the initiative that the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines took on behalf of the L.69 group to submit a letter that clearly articulates that same fact and sets the record straight with regard to the overwhelming view of the Assembly.

The time for simply repeating statements and emphasizing differences is over. With that in mind, I respectfully ask the President of the General Assembly to grant the co-Chairs his full support for initiating text-based negotiations without further delay. That is not merely the request of a particular group of countries, but a necessity in order to ensure the credibility of the process. After all, what other negotiations in the history of the United Nations have continued for decades without a text? The positions and proposals of Member States are reflected in the framework document and its annex, which provide a basis for negotiations. Additionally, the paper issued by the previous co-Chairs during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, entitled "Elements of commonality and issues for further consideration", can also serve as a reference. The necessary and logical next step is to prepare a concise and operational negotiation text — preferably in the form of a draft resolution. We need to launch text-based negotiations now, indeed as early as possible during the current session, so as to allow sufficient time for meaningful progress to be made during the remainder of the session.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize that an early reform of the Council is needed in order to make it more legitimate, effective and representative, thereby reflecting the realities of the twenty-first century. In order to achieve that goal, increasing representation in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories is required. There is broad support from Member States for that method of expanding Security Council membership. Its enlargement should consider the contribution of Member States to the maintenance of international peace and security. It also needs to enhance regional representation in the Security Council by ensuring that the concerns and aspirations of unrepresented or underrepresented regions are adequately taken into account. In particular, the historical injustice that Africa has suffered should be redressed through representation in both the permanent and non-permanent categories.

Secretary-General Guterres is taking bold and necessary steps to reform the United Nations across its three pillars, in order to render it fit for the twenty-first century. The Group of Four supports his efforts. Another indispensable element of reforming and strengthening the United Nations must be reform of one of its principal organs, the Security Council. In the Secretary-General's own words, reform of the United Nations will not be complete without reform of the Security Council. Progress in Security Council reform is critical, and all the elements are present. If we can put them together, we can succeed. We must succeed. The legitimacy, effectiveness and representativeness of the Security Council are at stake and, with them, the maintenance of international peace and security. As President Mandela said, it always seems impossible until it is done.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) group. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this annual debate on Security Council reform. We commend your commitment to a reform process that is credible, transparent and inclusive. Building on those same principles, the Uniting for Consensus group looks forward to cooperating with the new co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, Ambassadors Nusseibeh and Imnadze. We warmly welcome them in their new capacity and wish to express our full support for them in the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations session.

The credibility of a membership-driven process such as the intergovernmental negotiations depends on its transparency and inclusiveness. Only through a transparent process that takes into account the voices of all Member States can we jointly define the consensual path that the Uniting for Consensus group believes is the key to making concrete progress. All we have to do is avoid the obstacles that have so far prevented us from achieving our common goal and work in a true spirit of flexibility and compromise.

Over the years, the Uniting for Consensus group has consistently pointed out that the main roadblock to reform is the demand for an increase in the number of permanent members on the Council. At the same time, we have offered a compromise solution consisting of longer-term non-permanent members with the possibility of an immediate re-election, coupled with a more equitable distribution of seats among regional groups. Longer-term seats would fulfil the legitimate desire of some Member States to make a greater contribution to the work of the Council. That reform model would enhance regional representation as follows. Africa

would constitute the largest group on the reformed Council, while the Asia-Pacific region would have the highest percentage increase and the representation of both Latin America and Eastern Europe would double. Our proposed distribution would also enable cross-regional groupings such as the Group of Arab States to have greater, more stable representation. At the intergovernmental negotiations meeting on 8 May we distributed a chart with a breakdown of our regional representation proposal. A copy of it is available on PaperSmart, attached to my statement.

Our initiative is the fruit of an inclusive vision that we are firmly convinced would bring about a more representative, democratic, accountable, transparent and effective Council. So we were taken aback by the opposition that some delegations expressed last year to the principles of democracy and representation. On the one hand, it revealed the true underlying reasons for the current stalemate. On the other, it showed us how urgently we need a serious discussion of the principles underpinning Security Council reform. Without clarity on what we are aiming for, we will never reach our destination. We expect Member States to finally be given the opportunity to engage in just such a discussion during this session, paving the way for the next steps before us, including text-based negotiations.

Last year the whole United Nations membership agreed that — and I quote the co-Chairs' final document,

> "The intergovernmental negotiations process should build on the work done in previous years, so that convergence will increase gradually with a view to garnering the widest possible political acceptance."

This document enables us to say unequivocally that all Member States agree with the idea of expanding the number of non-permanent seats on the Council. All Member States agree that such an increase should favour countries belonging to the underrepresented regions of the world. To that, we should add that a significant and growing number of Member States are opposed to an expansion of the veto and indeed support limitations on its use.

If we are to truly build on the work of previous years, then the middle ground for a compromise solution leading to Security Council reform can be mapped out only on the basis of these three broad areas of agreement. They are the pillars of our new Council, which we all want to reflect the reality of the contemporary world. But the reality of the twenty-first century is constantly evolving, with new regional actors and new global challenges continuing to emerge in a changing reality to which the Council must constantly adapt. There is no better guarantee of that adaptability than regular elections, which would also make the Security Council more democratic, accountable and inclusive by offering all Member States, rather than a select few, the opportunity to make a greater and more frequent contribution to the Council's work.

After almost 25 years of focusing on demands for new permanent seats, which would benefit only a handful of Member States, it is high time to give a concrete chance to all Member States and offer real prospects to the groups of States and regions of the world that are underrepresented on the Council. We see no possibility that adding new vetoes could make a new Council more effective, more responsive to international crises or better able to cope with today's global challenges.

The Uniting for Consensus group stands ready to cooperate with you, Mr. President, with the new intergovernmental negotiations co-Chairs and the whole membership to advance this process, with the common goal of increasing the Council's legitimacy in the eyes of both the general membership and international public opinion, thereby enhancing its authority and, ultimately, its effectiveness. We are willing to redouble our efforts to achieve reform without delay, building on the many existing convergences among Member States to arrive at a comprehensive reform of the Security Council that will garner the broadest possible consensus by enlarging the Council with new elected members and a more balanced and equitable representation of regional groups.

Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as our contribution to today's debate on the question of Security Council reform.

CARICOM would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your decision to appoint Ambassadors Lana Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, and Kaha Imnadze, Permanent Representative of Georgia, as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations for the current session. We would also like to express our appreciation to them for accepting the appointment. CARICOM looks

forward to working with them and with Member States to advance the Assembly's work under this agenda item, and we reiterate our full support for the process. We would also like to thank Ambassadors Ion Jinga of Romania and Mohamed Khaled Khiari of Tunisia for their able stewardship of this process during the seventy-first session.

In your address to the First Committee on 2 October (see A/C.1/72/PV.2), Mr. President, you called on Member States to summon the political will to do more in the context of our work on disarmament and international security. Today CARICOM extends that call to Member States in the context of their work on reform of the Security Council, as we believe that political will is crucial to achieving forward movement on this long-standing issue. It is incumbent on all of us to demonstrate our commitment to the goal of reform, as it is the Member States themselves that must work to achieve it.

In 1993, when the General Assembly established the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council to consider matters related to Security Council reform, that decision was based on its recognition of the need to

> "review the membership of the Security Council and related matters in view of the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, especially of developing countries, as well as the changes in international relations" (*resolution 48/26, third preambular paragraph*).

Two and a half decades later, that need has not been comprehensively addressed, although we have had limitless opportunities to work to restructure the Council in order to bring it into line with current realities.

CARICOM wants to see progress on the issue, and we believe that it is possible, given the tremendous number of ideas that have been generated since the start of our debates on the question of Security Council reform. We are conscious, however, that progress requires putting those ideas to work, and many Member States, including the members of CARICOM, have put forward proposals and articulated their positions on how to achieve progress on the issue. Beyond that, Member States have agreed on the forum within which that progress is to be pursued, namely, the intergovernmental negotiations.

We have heard the arguments against having a negotiating text. After two and a half decades of very little progress, CARICOM believes that our discussions must zero in on those fundamental issues that divide us on the basis of clearly laid-out positions and proposals. I will again allude to your 2 October address to the First Committee, Mr. President, when you urged Member States to be constructive and reach across the aisle. CARICOM is prepared to engage constructively, as we have always done, and we are hopeful that this session's intergovernmental negotiations will indeed build on what has been achieved so far.

In conclusion, CARICOM remains committed to the goal of reform of the Security Council as soon as possible. As a group of small island and low-lying coastal developing States, CARICOM believes that small island developing States have a critical stake in the maintenance of international peace and security, and are therefore well positioned to contribute to the work of the Council. We stand ready to work with all Member States for speedy reform of the Council.

Ms. Stener (Norway): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

I would like to begin by thanking the previous co-Chairs and all who have done a great job in laying the groundwork for this discussion. Let me also thank you, Mr. President, for initiating today's debate and for appointing the Permanent Representatives of the United Arab Emirates and Georgia to lead us in our discussions. We are in good hands.

I reaffirm the commitment of tl e Nordic countries to engaging in the collective efforts to reform the Security Council. Given the global and geopolitical challenges facing the United Nations, ensuring the effectiveness of the Security Council is more important than ever. We are encouraged by the momentum for reform that is currently energizing the work of the Secretariat and Member States, and we look forward to listening to and working with other Member States from all regions in support of reform.

The Security Council must become more transparent, effective, accountable and representative than it is now. That requires reform. An important and desirable step forward would be negotiations, based on a text. The Nordic countries support a balanced expansion of the Security Council. The aim must be to better reflect current geopolitical and economic

realities and ensure enhanced representation of developing countries, including both permanent and non-permanent seats for Africa. In our view, it is also important to ensure that small States can serve regularly as elected members of the Council.

I would like to assure the Assembly that the Nordic countries will contribute to a constructive dialogue among Member States, with a view to achieving further progress during this session of the General Assembly.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the L.69, a diverse group of developing countries from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific that are united by the common cause of achieving lasting and comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

In your acceptance speech (see A/71/PV.83) after your election to preside over the Assembly at its seventy-second session, Mr. President, you acknowledged that the most widely mentioned topic related to United Nations reform is reform of the Security Council. You further underscored that there is broad agreement that it is time to transform the Security Council into a twenty-first-century body, and you expressed your intention to work closely and consult widely with Member States on how to move forward the agreement that our leaders reached at the 2005 World Summit.

We would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, for continuing that process and for your letter of 30 October encouraging Member States to move forward, building on progress achieved in previous sessions of the General Assembly. We welcome the appointment of our distinguished colleagues Ambassadors Kaha Imnadze of Georgia and Lana Zaki Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates, and wish them every success in their efforts to move the process forward at a critical juncture. I would also like to take this opportunity to assure you and the co-Chairs, Mr. President, of our group's full support and cooperation during this session.

The United Nations has come a long way since 1945. In 1979, just 14 years after the first expansion of the Security Council, a request for a second expansion was made to the General Assembly. The initiation of the process for considering the agenda item relating to Security Council reform in the Assembly finally began in 1992. On 11 December this year, we mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Assembly's adoption in December 1992, of resolution 47/62, which requested the Secretary-General to invite Member States to submit, not later than 30 June 1993, written comments on a possible review of the membership of the Security Council. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit for the Assembly's consideration at its forty-eighth session a report containing comments by Member States on the subject and decided to include on the provisional agenda for its forty-eighth session an item entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council".

The intergovernmental negotiations process started in 2008, more than three years after our leaders at the 2005 World Summit clearly stated that speedy reform of the Security Council was necessary. While the commencement of the intergovernmental negotiations provided new hope to people around the world, 10 years later we are at a crucial juncture. Will we elect to continue with these so-called negotiations, which are at variance with the way we do business here at the United Nations and are a glaring exception to internationally accepted norms? The L.69 group is of the view that it is the responsibility of the entire membership of the General Assembly and you, Mr. President, to prevent that dysfunctional process from continuing. In that connection, we welcomed your expressed intention at the opening of the general debate in the seventy-second session to promote a credible process to address reform of the Security Council.

If we are serious about the credibility of the intergovernmental negotiations, we must, with a sense of urgency, introduce standard United Nations negotiating practices into their mode of operation. Failure to do so will not only put the entire process at risk but will also allow a minority to appropriate the process by using it as a vehicle for maintaining the status quo. That is not the purpose for which the intergovernmental negotiations were mandated. On the contrary, its mandate is to seek a solution that can achieve general agreement on the question of the Security Council's equitable representation and increased membership. We therefore favour a solutions-based approach to the intergovernmental negotiations process.

We would like to draw the Assembly's attention to document A/72/510, which contains a letter that the L.69 group submitted to the President of the Assembly at its seventy-first session. Annexes I and II to the letter detail the wide support for the initiation of text-based negotiations from 164 Member States. In response to an assertion that only a few countries have engaged in

the intergovernmental negotiations process, we showed that more than 180 have engaged in the process since it began. We have also seen attempts by some to use the arguments for text-based negotiations to discredit other groups' positions. The call for a negotiating text is not a demand but reflects a shared responsibility. The requirement for a progressive and normalized process is not an achievement in and of itself, but a practical necessity. Without a text to guide that process, without a text to track the evolution and distillation of positions, we have seen how this abnormal process can hinder the earnest attempts of Member States to engage. During the last intergovernmental negotiations we saw how this peculiar approach creates the potential for unnecessary confusion and inadvertent misrepresentation or misunderstanding of Member States' positions by virtue of the fact that there are no records of how their positions have evolved over time.

Over the years, we have discussed the five key issues ad nauseam. We have gathered and discussed and heard positions and proposals from all groups and individual Member States many times over. Where do we go from here? That is the question we must answer before we reflexively commence our next round of so-called negotiations on that important issue.

Finally, Mr. President, you have made focusing on people your mantra, and rightly so. We were sent here to advocate on behalf of our people. Our engagement in the intergovernmental negotiations is not an intellectual exercise. We are accountable to our taxpayers for the use of their hard-earned dollars. In the spirit of transparency and openness, it is time for us to at least let the world see what we have been discussing for so many years. They have a right to know where we are and whether we are any closer to achieving our goals. If we are making progress, the people should see it. If we are not, they should also be made aware of what is hindering our progress. That is the minimum that we owe to our constituents, the people of the world. In that regard, it is our young people, in particular, whose lives will be shaped by the decisions taken by the Assembly.

Our group believes that expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership is imperative in order to better reflect the realities of the contemporary world and achieve a more accountable, representative, transparent and, most importantly, relevant Security Council. In that regard, the issue of Africa's representation in both the permanent and non-permanent categories must be addressed by the Assembly in line with the African common position.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I hope that under your guidance and active engagement we will, as per your own words, move the process forward. We believe that the measure of that commitment will be manifested by the formulation of a negotiating text that serves to re-energize the intergovernmental negotiations process and lays a basis for speedy and meaningful reform.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for your sterling opening remarks articulating your commitment to putting in place a meaningful and credible reform process. They have set the stage for our consideration of agenda item 122, on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the Permanent Representatives of Japan, on behalf of the nations of the Group of Four, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on behalf of the L.69 group of developing countries. I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

We meet for the annual consideration of this agenda item for the twenty-fifth consecutive time, even as we witness accelerating change all around us. A futurist cataloguing change in the twenty-first century concluded that between 2000 and 2014, the total of the changes affecting our lives was equivalent to that of the entire twentieth century. He also predicted that according to his law of accelerating returns, another twentieth century's worth of change will happen in half that time, by 2021. Of course, it appears that he forgot to study the practice and pursuit of this agenda item, which has remained unchanged for years before 2000 and years since 2014. This agenda item is indicative of the lack of even incremental change in our approach to issues of importance, oblivious of the pace of change all around us. As multilateral diplomats, we are indeed used to punishing processes, but never has a process itself become a punishment, as in this case.

If that is the new normal, it does not bode well for multilateralism. Never have the normative foundations of multilateral cooperation been shown to be weaker than in this instance. If the most representative of existing multilateral institutions can only muddle along, holding meetings and issuing reports that are not even minor stabs at marginal improvement, and if the gap between the demand for global governance and the

shortage of responses provided by existing multilateral institutions is growing, we need to ponder if what we are witnessing is the symptoms of a recession of multilateralism. There is no more vivid reflection of that deepening crisis of multilateralism than the dysfunctional Security Council, which no longer reflects contemporary realities and hence faces a crisis of legitimacy and credibility. Similarly, there is no greater example of the institutional inertia that resists constructive adaptation than the inability to translate discussions into a text for negotiations, despite 10 years of so-called intergovernmental negotiations authorized by the General Assembly and the Assembly's own annual consideration of the agenda item, which has continued since 1993.

At a time when proliferating transnational threats, deepening economic interdependence and worsening environmental degradation all call for effective multilateral action, we have fallen short of a substantive response on an issue as important as reform of the Security Council. That is a sign that the ageing pillars of the established multilateral order are creaking and crumbling all around us, unable to meet the need for change.

It is axiomatic that reforms tend to generate reforms. This year, the Secretary-General has drawn up a broad set of reform proposals, including in the area of peace and security. No reform of the United Nations peace and security architecture will be complete without reform of the Security Council. It would not be wrong to say that an unreformed Council could in fact undermine progress that could be made in other areas of that continuum. The time is therefore ripe for progress on Security Council reform as part of a wide-ranging agenda of reform during this session of the General Assembly.

So what should we specifically do to avail ourselves of this opportunity? First, as a French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, once said, war is too important to be left to the generals. In the modern era, perhaps, diplomacy seems to have become too important to be left to the diplomats. That need not be a bad thing. Modern challenges demand the concerted efforts not only of Governments but of whole societies. So society more generally could be more involved in the diplomatic process. Perhaps we should consider options whereby we open up the process so that others are aware of what is stopping the current discussions from even beginning on the path of a negotiating text. Transparency in the work of diplomats is a useful adaptation that we can consider as a pathway to progress in this changing world.

Secondly, the differences between those who advocate change and the defenders of the status quo are a recurring pattern in the history of any reform effort. The annexes to document A/72/510 detail the critical mass that is available for initiating a normal reform process. Having a negotiating text is not only a demand of the majority but, as the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has just said, the responsibility of all the membership. A normalized process does not guarantee results by itself. It expresses the good faith and sincerity of the entire membership. It is time to have a normal process, with a text and records of who said what, so as to help all of us understand one another's positions with greater clarity and respect.

Thirdly, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on commencing your stewardship of that process with the welcome appointment as co-Chairs of our colleagues Ambassadors Imnadze of Georgia and Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates. We wish them success in their efforts. We hope that under their leadership we will courageously move the process forward. We have had more than our share of routines, continuity and statements and too little of initiatives, flexibility and results. We call on the co-Chairs to replace routines with initiatives, continuity with flexibility and statements with results. Only then will we diplomats be able to do what the philosopher Edmund Burke paraphrased as those things that men of intelligence and goodwill would wish, five or 10 years hence, had been done. That opportunity lies within our grasp. As always, the choice is ours to make.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassadors Jinga and Khiari for ably leading the Security Council reform process during the previous session and, Mr. President, to warmly welcome your appointment of Ambassadors Imnadze and Nusseibeh as co-Chairs to take the process forward during the seventy-second session. We wish them the best of luck. They will need it.

While I hesitate to start on a negative note, I must express disappointment that there has not been greater progress on reforming the Council. Over the previous three sessions, we have taken constructive steps towards the ambitious and important reforms that are needed. Discussions in that regard have provided a useful foundation for reaching mutual understanding

and for finding common ground. However, we have not been able to proceed to concrete reform on the key issue of membership.

Australia's position on Security Council reform is well known. We have advocated reform of the Security Council for many years. Reforming the Security Council, like reform of other elements of the United Nations, is about ensuring that it is fit for purpose. It should be seen as a necessity, not an optional extra. To be relevant and effective, the Council should better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities, with greater representation for Asia, Africa and Latin America. We support expansion in the permanent and non-permanent categories. Such expansion should not inhibit the Council's ability to act swiftly and decisively but should take place within limits and be accompanied by improvements to the Council's working methods. Australia has long held that the Council's working methods should reflect greater transparency, better coordination with the General Assembly and better consultation with troop- and police-contributing countries.

Australia also urges all Member States, especially the permanent five, to commit to the code of conduct of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group and the complementary French-Mexican declaration, which calls for restraint in the use of the veto in situations of mass atrocity. Those two related initiatives have formed one of the few welcome concrete steps taken towards Council reform in recent years.

We welcome the practical measures identified in the paper entitled "Elements of convergence on two key issues of Security Council reform: the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, and the size of an enlarged Security Council and working methods of the Council" and the subsequent paper entitled, "Elements of commonality and issues for further consideration on the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". We now urge Member States to move towards implementation without delay. That includes moving to text-based negotiations, which would build momentum and demonstrate our commitment to delivering these reforms. If we collectively fail to take this next step, and simply reiterate well-known positions again, it will bring this reform process into question. If the end product of our deliberations is yet another "Elements" paper, the credibility and relevance of the process will be in doubt.

The Security Council must uphold its mandate to maintain international peace and security. We acknowledge that it can act effectively when necessary. We note in particular its response to the recent provocations by North Korea. But the Security Council, like other parts of the multilateral architecture, must be able to adjust to changes in the global landscape. It cannot operate in a vacuum. It is necessary for the credibility of the United Nations that we undertake meaningful reform of the Council, especially on the crucial issue of membership.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Deteriorating humanitarian situations threaten regional and international stability. The possible atrocity crimes in Myanmar, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere demand unified action by the Security Council to provide peace, security and accountability. The Council, one of the principal organs of the United Nations, is equipped with powerful tools to alleviate human suffering and enforce peace and stability. But it frequently fails to live up to the expectations that people around the globe have for it. All too often, it is unable to use the powerful tools it was given under the Charter of the United Nations. That undermines perceptions not just of the Council itself but of the United Nations as an organization.

The pressing need for Security Council reform is beyond dispute. We have all said that time and again, including at the highest political levels. In the area of enlargement, however, there can be no prospect of progress as long as the deeply entrenched views on the opposing sides of the discussion prevail. Without any indication of flexibility, it is hard to imagine a way forward. Indeed, we must challenge the fundamentals of the process we are engaged in. We thank our colleagues from the United Arab Emirates and from Georgia for taking up the difficult challenge of leading our discussions. We will give them our full support, and we hope that they will be innovative and bold in their work.

As is well known, we have suggested an enlargement model that we hope could provide a middle ground in the discussion, adding long-term Council seats of eight to ten years with the possibility of immediate re-election. The other main elements of our proposal are no new veto powers, a strong review clause and a flip-flop clause that bars Member States that have lost

an election for long-term seats from running for short-term seats.

Enlargement of the Council does not equal reform. Who serves on the Council is certainly an essential question for how it is perceived and its credibility. How the Council goes about its daily business and carries out its functions is no less important. Together with like-minded States, we have worked consistently to help the Council do better in that respect, and we have achieved significant results. The creation of an ombudsperson for the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions regime, for example, was an initiative that had its origins outside the Security Council.

Another key initiative in that respect is the code of conduct on Council action on mass atrocity crimes. We had the honour to lead the efforts of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group that led to the code of conduct, which so far has been embraced by 114 States, all of which are committed to taking action to end and prevent atrocity crimes when serving as Council members. They will do so by committing to taking action to that effect and also by not opposing credible proposals suggested in the Council to that end. Recent situations of relevance to this issue include those in Myanmar, South Sudan and Yemen, to name just a few. We have been gratified to see that the Secretary-General has submitted relevant information to the Security Council for action. The Council, however, has been frustratingly slow to respond. We believe that subscribing to the code of conduct is the minimum commitment we should be able to expect from any Council member. In future, therefore, we will support candidatures for the Security Council only from States that have signed the code of conduct. We also call on all States that have not yet done so to join the code of conduct as soon as possible.

Mr. Inguanez (Malta): Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Italy on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus group. I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

We would also like to join others in thanking you, Mr. President, for initiating this debate, and in congratulating the new co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform for this session. We would like to assure them of Malta's support and constructive engagement in the process.

Reform of the Security Council is a delicate and sensitive dossier. We are under no illusion as to the magnitude of the challenge. There is no doubt that strategic interests are at stake, which renders the process slow and wearing. That is inherent in the issues of reform under consideration, but we should not be deterred from taking an inclusive and transparent approach. On the contrary, that is perhaps even more essential. The more we debate, the more we explore ideas and the more we come to realize the short- and long-term implications of what we are talking about. We hold that it is not here or through a text that we will have the opportunity and the time to truly understand the effects, operational difficulties and implications of the proposals on the table. It is not here that we will have the time to analyse the repercussions of our ideas in depth. Rather, it is only through time itself that true, calm and objective reflection can take place on the complexities involved and their potential future impact. It is time that will enable the discussions to evolve and reach maturity. It is time that will enable Member States to reflect on and comprehend how multilateral diplomacy will unfold in the years to come by supporting one option over another.

In the meantime, in a positive and constructive spirit, the Uniting for Consensus group has sought to develop over the years a proposal that takes a consensus approach. It has tried to reach out to all States and include their concerns, while not prejudicing what we believe to be the essential principles of reform. The reform process is a Member State-driven exercise and a painstaking one. Malta acknowledges that what we discuss in the process reflects on the United Nations membership collectively and individually. Besides that, we affirm that what we discuss here affects and goes beyond Member States' interests and positions. It is therefore important to ensure that in the quest for ways to make the Organization reflect today's realities, we do not neglect the fundamental aims of reform — optimizing its organic democracy, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and representation. This reform exercise is about sowing the seeds, whether we agree on them or not, for a new multilateral order. Only in that way can we recalibrate the system without creating new imbalances.

Malta believes that the aim of our reform should be first and foremost an equitable increase in representation with respect to Member States within an enlarged Council, bearing in mind today's new

realities. But in doing so, we should also recalibrate with regard to the whole of the United Nations membership — big, medium-sized and small States. Small States have a particular interest in seeing to it that future multilateralism leaves enough ground for them. Small States have an interest in seeing that the multilateral framework will not end up composed of a wider, if stronger, core and a weaker periphery. Small States want to play their part, but not on the fringes. We are cognizant of the difficulties involved. However, we remain full of hope that pragmatism will win over. Nothing can hinder us from working to find out in practical terms what we can achieve together, what we can improve and to what extent we can do that. With that in mind, we look forward to this year's negotiations.

Mr. Ja Song Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would first like to express my appreciation for the efforts of the representatives of Romania and Tunisia as last year's co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform.

The issue of Council reform is an important and pressing matter, given the currently complicated international situation, and we need it if we are to build a world of peace and stability. Today, the fundamental principles of international relations — equality, sovereignty and mutual respect — as laid down in the Charter of the United Nations are being seriously violated. Sovereign States are being openly subjected to interference, military intervention and massacres in the international arena. Under the pretexts of so-called non-proliferation and counter-terrorism, State-sponsored terrorism and plots against sovereign States are becoming more blatant. Terrorist forces are being formed on a global scale, and the catastrophic consequences of that are leading to a disastrous refugee situation.

Situations such as these, which seriously affect world peace and security, are caused by the United States, which uses its privileged position as a permanent member of the Security Council and its political clout to implement its strategy for world dominance. The United States, the biggest nuclear Power in the world, has continued to make historically unprecedented nuclear threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and has denounced the security measures we have taken as a threat to international peace and security while it continues to impose unlawful sanctions and resolutions one after another. Even more serious, the Security Council, which is responsible for world peace and security, has turned a blind eye to the nuclear threats and nuclear-war exercises that the United States has conducted against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for half a century, and has not taken a single measure to ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula.

I also strongly condemn the remarks just made by the representative of Australia about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That country merely plays to the tune of the United States without knowing anything of the reality of the situation on the Korean peninsula.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea insists on total Security Council reform. We clarify our principled position as follows. First, reform of the Security Council should focus on ensuring impartiality, objectivity and democracy. Activities such as the adoption of resolutions that justify and legitimize the aggression of certain countries against others, in violation of truth and justice, should no longer be tolerated.

Secondly, Security Council reform should ensure the full representation of members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), as well as of developing countries. There can be no question that the more than 120 NAM and developing countries, which represent a majority in the United Nations, should have full representation on the Security Council. As we can see from the results of the intergovernmental negotiations, although 10 years have passed since the issue of expanding the Security Council was first addressed, the situation remains unchanged, owing to various countries' conflicting views. Under these circumstances, the only way to adjust the imbalance in the Council is to increase the number of non-permanent seats on it.

Japan's efforts to achieve permanent membership on the Security Council should never be tolerated. Japan is a major criminal State, having militarily invaded many Asian countries and committed heinous, unimaginable crimes against humanity and crimes of sexual slavery in particular. The fact that Japan, which is denying such inhumane crimes and is now showing tendencies towards militarism, is seeking a permanent seat on the Council is grotesque and an open affront to the international community.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has thus clarified its principled position on Security Council reform and expresses the hope that

the international community's protracted efforts to reform the Security Council will bear fruit in future.

Mr. Skinner-Klée Arenales (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Georgia and the United Arab Emirates on their appointment as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. We are confident that under their leadership and given their abilities, we will be able to make progress in reaching consensus on this vital issue. I would of course also like to express our gratitude for the good work done previously by the Permanent Representatives of Tunisia and Romania and for the elements of consensus that they were able to provide in past negotiations.

My delegation renews its commitment to ensuring that the Security Council reform process is participatory, exhaustive, transparent, equitable and, above all, viable and adaptable to today's world and its challenges. Institutions cannot remain static or paralysed at this historic time. Rather, they should be prepared for change and for evolving effectively in order to face the circumstances and the challenges to which they must respond. Without question, the global political and economic reality of 1945 is not commensurate with the current reality; nor is that of 1965. It is therefore appropriate and urgent that we review the structure and functioning of the Council. We believe the Council must have sufficient flexibility and the capacity to respond to current challenges and that it must be efficient, representative and transparent. If we want the Council to maintain its validity and legitimacy and to carry out the responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter of the United Nations, we must be willing to accept that maintaining the status quo is not an option.

In that connection, the main goal of the reform should be to ensure that the Security Council can respond appropriately to any threat to international peace and security in the current global situation. However, inertia and paralysis prevail, thereby exposing the Council to a progressive loss of relevance and revealing its obstinate failure to act in the face of the normative power of the facts — the realpolitik — which poses a greater threat to the world order.

That paralysis has become increasingly evident, for example, with the use or threat of use of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council. Far from supporting the defence of the collective interest with arguments that facilitate consensus, the non-acquiescence of the permanent members has obstructed and distorted the common interest, which in turn foments division among the members of the Council, leading to an abdication of the serious responsibilities that fall to it. Moreover, over time we have found that the concerns expressed by many delegations during the San Francisco Conference in 1945 regarding the veto were completely valid and justify further consideration of that issue. That is why Guatemala questions whether the veto should be allowed at all, even if other States seek that power within the framework of Security Council reform. One approach to circumvent the veto problem can be found in the proposals of France and Mexico with regard to a declaration to restrict the use of the veto, with the additional guidance of a code of conduct regarding the action that the Security Council should ideally take in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. We believe that the contribution made by those delegations represents a valuable alternative.

We know that any change is difficult, and that is why we believe that the intergovernmental negotiation process should seek to make gradual progress in a progressive reform process that includes the membership and working methods of the Security Council. Only with the commitment and political will of all Member States, without impositions, can we achieve that goal. Our collective approach must be aimed at achieving a viable and practical agreement through a process in which we are all willing to be flexible and transparent. Only that would allow the Security Council to adapt to current and future circumstances.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): Brazil associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Japan on behalf of the Group of Four, and by the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the L.69 group, and would like to add the following comments in its national capacity.

This session's debate on this agenda item is particularly timely, as it takes place during broader discussions of reforms that the Secretary-General wishes to implement within the United Nations. The need to modernize the United Nations and put it in a better position to address current challenges underlies those proposals. We expect that those reforms will include a democratization of the United Nations system, which will not be achieved unless the reform of the Security Council takes place. We were pleased that this

January, in Addis Ababa, Secretary-General António Guterres reiterated the assessment by his predecessor Kofi Annan that "no reform of the United Nations will be complete without the reform of the Security Council". Any attempt to reform the United Nations and bring its structures in line with current realities cannot overlook the reform of the Security Council.

In this year's opening meeting of the general debate, President Michel Temer also underscored the imperative of reforming the United Nations. He highlighted that

> "it is particularly necessary to enlarge the Security Council to adapt it to the realities of the twenty-first century. It is urgent that we listen to the will of the overwhelming majority of the General Assembly." (*A/72/PV.3, p.7*).

Brazil was not alone in underlining the urgent need for Security Council reform in the general debate. A significant number of countries also expressed concern about the outdated structure of the current composition of the Council and mentioned the need to adjust it to contemporary realities. Many pointed to its inefficiency and paralysis in dealing with the most pressing challenges to peace and security. That poses a great risk to its credibility and legitimacy. It is noteworthy that the vast majority of such statements come from developing countries, which are underrepresented in the most powerful decision-making organ of the United Nations. It is past time to redress that underrepresentation — especially that of African countries, the only continent not to have a permanent seat in the Council.

We welcome your commitment, Sir, at the opening of this session's general debate to "promote a credible process to address the reform of the Security Council" (*A/72/PV.3, p.6*). Brazil congratulates the Permanent Representative of Romania, Ambassador Ion Jinga, and the Permanent Representative of Tunisia, Ambassador Mohammed Khaled Khiari, on their work as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform during the previous session of the General Assembly, and welcomes the appointment of Ambassadors Kaha Imnadze of Georgia and Lana Zaki Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates as co-Chairs for the current session. As always, they can count on Brazil's full support in their endeavour.

Brazil expects the General Assembly at the current session to build on the progress made during the sixty-ninth, seventieth and seventy-first sessions. The documents produced by the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations during those sessions form a solid basis for text-based negotiations, which is the next logical step in the process. The previous years' exercises showed that convergence is possible and helped us to identify where the widest gaps remain. We should not refrain, however, from drafting a concise document that also reflects competing views. That is precisely what negotiation is about: an attempt to find common ground on areas where we do not necessarily converge. We expect to see text-based negotiations launched during the current session with a view to leading the intergovernmental negotiations towards a long-overdue concrete outcome.

Ms. Azucena (Philippines): We wish to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary debate to discuss the important question of reform of the Security Council. The Philippines supports the General Assembly's reaffirmation of its central role in that matter and its resolve to continue negotiations immediately. We count on your leadership to ensure continuity with the progress that has been achieved over the past years.

We also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Permanent Representatives of Georgia and the United Arab Emirates for having been appointed recently as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. We are confident that they will exert every effort to carry the negotiations forward for the benefit of all Member States.

I would like to reiterate the support of the Philippines for an enlarged Security Council with an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent, or elected, members of the Security Council. The Philippines supports the proposal to increase the number of Council members to up to 27. We believe that a broader membership would better reflect twenty-first century geopolitical realities and contribute to the pursuit of the Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security.

Critical to an enlarged Security Council is the balance in geographical representation, taking into account the size of the populations of regional groups. We must ensure that the Council is the one venue where the voices of all peoples of the world are heard. In that context, I wish to highlight the situation of the Group of Asia-Pacific States. The Group accounts for almost

60 per cent of the total population of all States Members of the United Nations. Moreover, with 54 Member States, it accounts for 28 per cent of the total United Nations membership. In peacekeeping operations all over the world, the Asia-Pacific countries contribute about 40 per cent of the total human resources needed to run those operations. Yet in the Security Council the Group accounts for only 20 per cent of the total number of seats, that is, only three seats — one permanent, two elected — out of the 15 seats. We should address that underrepresentation so as to ensure that the Security Council is truly representative of the interests of the peoples of the world.

An equally critical challenge that an enlarged Security Council has to tackle is how to remain effective and efficient. An enlarged Council must be able to act swiftly and decisively, with the highest standards of accountability, coherence, transparency and fidelity to the trust accorded to it by the greater United Nations membership. While any expansion could pose challenges to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council, my delegation believes that prioritizing key issues, particularly the reform and improvement of the working methods of the Council, could provide an antidote to any of those concerns.

The Philippines also reiterates its view that the veto power has no place in a twenty-first century Security Council. No Member State should be granted the special privilege to exercise the veto power, as that is in direct contravention of the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States, as enshrined in the Charter. We appreciate that the question of the veto is the most formidable challenge in our work to reform the Security Council. While the abolition of the veto continues to be our aspiration, we should all be prepared to take small steps that will hopefully bring us closer to that goal. To that end, the Philippines is open to considering ways to rationalize the use of the veto power by the Council's permanent members. We support the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group's code of conduct and the French-Mexican initiative, which spells out exceptions to the right to use the veto power. We also support the proposal that the extension of the right of the veto to new permanent Council members will be decided upon in the framework of a review. We understand that to mean that the new permanent members shall not exercise the veto until such review is concluded.

Over the years, there has already been a significant amount of work undertaken on Security Council reform. It is about time that our serious efforts lead to concrete results. The Philippines believes that the immediate commencement of text-based negotiations, as called for by many Member States, is a step in the right direction. We see it as a way to attain our aspiration for a truly representative and effective Security Council.

Mr. Masuku (Swaziland): Here we are at yet another session of many in which the item before us today is under discussion. I applaud the General Assembly for consistently keeping this matter under its focus, and I also commend the previous co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform for the work they have done so far to achieve progress in the debate on the issue. In the same vein, we welcome the incoming co-Chairs, and we pledge our support as they take on their monumental task.

We align ourselves with the statement made by the representative of the Republic of Sierra Leone on behalf of the Group of African States, and we welcome this opportunity to elaborate further on the matter in our national capacity.

The Security Council plays a key role in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is the arm of the United Nations that has been given important and far-reaching powers to act on behalf of the broader membership of the United Nations. It acts on our behalf and is meant to represent the interests of all. It is therefore crucial that the Security Council be reformed so that it can reflect the realities of the twenty-first century, which would make the Council more democratic, legitimate, representative, responsive and transparent in its working methods and decision-making processes. In that vein, I wish to reiterate the commitment of my delegation to this very important issue. We look forward to working with all Member States in building on the gains made thus far and to achieving consensus on the issues before us.

Notwithstanding the regrettably prolonged nature of the reform process, the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform have helped to illuminate the various positions that have been held by the various groupings of Member States. Certain areas where there is a convergence of views have been identified and, conversely, areas of divergence have also been highlighted. However, no matter how brilliant those views may be, they require further deliberation so

as to ensure progress towards inclusivity. It is therefore incumbent upon us to find the means to move from the current position of seeming deadlock and give fresh impetus to the reform process.

To that end, we reiterate the position of the Group of African States as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. It is only reasonable for Africa to be represented in the permanent-member category of the Security Council. Not only is the Council's agenda mainly concentrated on Africa, but such representation would also be a true expression of democratic practice. For a continent with 54 Member States, that is only fair. In spite of the fact that there are some who are at odds with that claim, we appeal to their moral sensibilities to consider the right thing. Is it fair to say that some are of no concern in the face of the injustice of history? A bit of empathy does not compromise anything. The principle of regional representation should rule supreme in this matter, in particular for the simple reason that the Security Council should resemble the character of the General Assembly, an Assembly that reveres the Charter, made famous by its statement, "We the peoples of the United Nations".

It is also our resolve to stand behind the increase of membership in the non-permanent category. It is immaterial how big the expansion is, but the details should reflect the geopolitical realities of the world today. The Security Council cannot be a dogmatic body, and the stature of its current membership brings into question the modernity and credibility of the United Nations.

With regard to the allocation of veto privileges, we fully subscribe to the prescription in the African Common Position. The veto should be extended to all new members in the permanent category as long as that power exists. Alternatively, we are comfortable with its abolition. However, to put everything into perspective, it is the feeling of my delegation that the veto is not in itself harmful; however, it is so within its current operational confines. In recent years, decorum has prevailed, but we are also mindful and similarly fearful of a once-in-a-century obstinacy rearing its head. Do we then curtail or re-engineer the use of the veto and prescribe certain operational parameters? Does it still retain its name after that? Those and other questions require further probing. In conclusion, we pray for a way forward sooner rather than later, and will endeavour to be progressive in the discussions of the matter. We call upon all our fellow Member States to adopt a similar approach.

Mr. Skinner-Klée Arenales (Guatemala), Vice-President, took the Chair

Mr. Sukhee (Mongolia): At the outset, I would like to join many others in expressing our sincere appreciation for the convening of this important meeting and in welcoming the appointment of Ambassador Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates and Ambassador Imnadze of Georgia as the new co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations. I wish to assure them of our delegation's full support and cooperation with the aim of moving that process forward in our shared endeavour to reform the Security Council. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by Ambassador King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on behalf of the L.69 group and wishes to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

My delegation shares the view that we should continue moving the process forward through negotiations, building on the work of previous sessions and the framework document and its annex, as well as the elements of convergence paper on two key issues of the reform. Mongolia also believes that the Security Council should be reformed to make it more accountable, representative, transparent, efficient and effective. It is therefore important that, based on those common elements and positions, we begin the process towards the path of text-based negotiations.

In a Member State-driven process, the call by Member States to have all views respected and reflected in a negotiating text is something that can be addressed only with a clear road map for progress in that process and a structured approach aimed at concrete results. As such, the intergovernmental negotiations process has an important role to play, and we join others today in calling for the commencement of text-based negotiations without further delay, taking into account the fact that an overwhelming majority supports expansion in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories of the membership of the Security Council.

I would also like to reaffirm our principled position concerning the reform of the Security Council on three key issues. Regarding the categories of membership, Mongolia has consistently stood for a just and equitable expansion in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories. Our stance in favour of an enlargement of both of the current categories is guided by and based on

the composition set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and is reflective of contemporary realities, as well as the principles of justice and equality, in order to ensure the greater and enhanced representation of developing countries, particularly the non- and underrepresented regional groups.

With respect to the question of the veto, it is our view that the veto should be abolished. We could also support the restricted use of the veto power in the Security Council, in particular with regard to decisions relating to Chapter VII of the Charter. So long as it exists, the veto power should be extended to all new members in the permanent category of the Security Council, which must enjoy all the prerogatives and privileges of the current permanent membership.

On the key issue of regional representation, adequate representation of all regions, particularly non- and underrepresented, in both of the categories of the Security Council must be duly considered. The solution should to be fair and just. We therefore attach high importance to the criterion of equitable geographical distribution, with an emphasis on the non- and underrepresented groups, particularly Africa, Asia and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. As to the non-permanent category, strengthening a fair and equitable rotation system within a geographical regional group is an important issue for my delegation. In that respect, my delegation also supports the addition of seats to the current regional groups, specifically with a view to ensuring the representation of small developing States.

In conclusion, it is our firm belief that only through genuine text-based negotiations will we find convergences and bridge our differences so as to achieve a meaningful and early reform of the Security Council.

Mr. Gafoor (Singapore): I would like to thank the President for convening this plenary meeting early in his presidency and for giving priority to the issue of Security Council reform. We welcome the active engagement of the President in that important process.

I join previous speakers in congratulating Ambassador Kaha Imnadze of Georgia and Ambassador Lana Zaki Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates on their appointment as the new co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. We are confident that they will continue to lead the work of the intergovernmental negotiations in an inclusive, transparent and efficient manner, and that we will make progress under their leadership.

We would also like to place on record our appreciation to the former co-Chairs, Ambassador Ion Jinga of Romania and Ambassador Mohamed Khaled Khiari of Tunisia. Their excellent work during the last round of intergovernmental negotiations culminated in an important paper on the elements of commonality and issues for further consideration. I commend both of them for their leadership and hard work. The paper that they prepared builds on the work of the intergovernmental negotiations over the past two years. Together with the framework document and the elements of convergence paper, their latest paper provides a good foundation for our work in the intergovernmental negotiations at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

As we resume another year of negotiations under the intergovernmental negotiations process, it is important to keep in mind a few facts. The intergovernmental negotiations started to function in 2009. Before the intergovernmental negotiations process, the open-ended working group was launched in 1993. In other words, we have been discussing the issue for a quarter of a century, as many previous speakers have mentioned. No one expects that such a difficult issue can be resolved overnight. But nor is it reasonable or credible to expect the intergovernmental negotiations process to continue for another quarter of a century without any results to show.

Allow me to put it starkly — is the intergovernmental negotiations process a help or hindrance to the reform process? The answer depends on whether that process is able to deliver concrete progress. If the intergovernmental negotiations process is able to demonstrate progress, it will be regarded with respect and credibility. However, if it is not able to, there will be serious questions as to the value of continuing the intergovernmental negotiations process.

If we are serious about reforming the Security Council, we need to inject a greater sense of urgency into our work and aim to reach a real negotiating process. We cannot treat that process as an annual ritual that serves merely to keep delegations busy and preoccupied. Ultimately, Security Council reform is the key to maintaining the relevance and credibility of the United Nations system as a whole. If the Security Council continues to operate in a business-as-usual manner, it will be unable to deal effectively with

the intractable challenges that we all face in today's complex global environment.

As a small State, Singapore has always been a firm advocate and defender of a rules-based, multilateral system. The role of the Security Council is critical in such a system. We therefore attach great importance to the intergovernmental negotiations process, because we want a transparent, accountable and effective Security Council. As a small State, Singapore does not stand to benefit directly from any particular model of reform or Security Council expansion. What we seek is the strengthening of the multilateral system. Singapore's position on Security Council reform is clear.

First, we believe in making the Council more representative and inclusive. We support an expanded membership in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories of membership in the Council. That is necessary, in our view, if we are to ensure that the composition of the Council embodies the diverse membership of the United Nations as it exists today.

Secondly, reform should make the Council more accountable, transparent and inclusive for all Member States. In particular, the reform process should not disadvantage small States in their efforts to seek election to the Security Council. For many small countries like Singapore, that factor is important, as we do not have many opportunities to serve in the Council.

Thirdly, our work must make the Council more effective in dealing with the many challenges that it faces today. All that Singapore needs and expects of the Security Council is that it be able to act swiftly and decisively when confronted by global crises. What we do not want is a Security Council that is paralysed by political divisions or prevented from acting by the use of the veto.

As we embark on the current session of intergovernmental negotiations, we need to build on the excellent work of the previous co-Chairs and sustain the momentum for progress. The paper prepared by the co-Chairs at the previous intergovernmental negotiations session was an important outcome, as it identified in one consolidated document the key elements of commonality on all five clusters of issues pursuant to decision 62/557, and it also listed other issues that merit further reflection and discussion. We need to use that paper to take our work forward. Allow me, in that connection, to make some suggestions, which may help to guide our work during the upcoming session.

First, we need to look anew at the elements of commonality and identify areas in which we can take advantage of the progress already made. For example, some of the elements of convergence relating to the working methods of the Security Council and its relationship with the General Assembly are already in the process of being implemented, such as an increase in the number of open meetings of the Council, the regular meetings between the Presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and the submission of annual reports by the Security Council.

In that regard, we welcomed the adoption of the revised Security Council presidential note S/2010/507, which builds on previous Security Council efforts to improve the Council's working methods and to enhance its efficiency and transparency, as well as the interaction and dialogue with non-Council members and bodies. There is scope for the General Assembly to acknowledge and formalize those improvements so that they become standard work procedures, rather than ad hoc, informal measures taken by the Council. In our view, there are some practical steps that we can take now, without making any amendments to the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to improving the practices of the Security Council.

Secondly, we should continue our discussions on issues that have been identified for further consideration. There will naturally be differing points of view and perspectives, but that should not prevent us from having an open and frank discussion of the issues. We should attempt to narrow differences, try to broaden the elements of commonality, and hopefully include new areas of convergence. In that regard, we would support entering into substantive negotiations by putting ideas and proposals on paper and having a focused debate on those ideas and proposals.

Thirdly, we should revisit some of the issues that enjoyed strong support but were not ultimately included in the paper prepared by the co-Chairs last year as points of commonality. One issue that could be considered for inclusion as a point of commonality is the growing support for the limitation of the use of the veto in cases involving mass atrocities. A majority of Member States support that proposal, and, as far as we recall, no delegation expressly objected to it at the previous intergovernmental negotiations session. In our

view, we should take an inclusive approach and work to improve the co-Chairs' paper with new points of commonality, particularly when there is strong support for them.

The suggestions that we have just made are aimed at advancing the intergovernmental negotiations process. As we have said many times, the imperative for Security Council reform remains more real than ever before. We need to accelerate the pace of our work aimed at achieving early and meaningful reforms. My delegation will work with the President of the General Assembly as well as with the two new co-Chairs and other delegations to advance the reform agenda and make the Security Council more open, accountable, effective, and inclusive.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting, which I consider to be of the utmost importance as it addresses one of the most controversial issues within the Organization, namely, undertaking the reform of the Security Council. Undoubtedly, as the President said this morning, this may very well be an opportunity for all of us to finally to move towards a consensus that would enable us to progress consistently within the intergovernmental negotiations. I would like to join my colleagues who spoke before me in thanking Ambassadors Ion Jinga of Romania and Mohamed Khiari of Tunisia for their successful and very constructive work guiding the discussion process of the intergovernmental negotiations during the previous session. I also take this opportunity to welcome Ambassadors Kaha Imnadze of Georgia and Lana Zaki Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates for taking the reins as the new co-Chairs.

The reform process is one that requires the entire membership to continue moving forward in identifying those points that bring us closer together in discussions, so that we can finally count on a Security Council that reflects the current geopolitical reality, its various nuances and the need for greater accountability and transparency in the Council's work. On behalf of my country and in aligning myself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus group, I would like to highlight several elements that we consider to be of key importance for the beginning of the current session.

First, the moment is undoubtedly ripe for advancing the process with new vigour, as the President said in his statement this morning. To achieve that, it is important, in our view, to reiterate once again that — for the Uniting for Consensus group — the fundamental difference with respect to other proposals lies only in our firm conviction that a Council of more democratic and inclusive nature would result from the participation of a greater number of elected members. We would also seek to prevent the expansion of privileges such as the right of the veto.

We believe that, as the most representative Organization at the global level, the United Nations must lead by example — which should be manifest particularly in the body that is fundamentally responsible for peace and international stability. Attaining that goal rests on two fundamental pillars: regional representation and the accountability emanating from regular elections. In that context, the document produced by the co-Chairs at the seventy-first session of the General Assembly made it clear that all Member States, without exception, wish to reform the Security Council.

We understand that after the several decades since the previous reform and the 10 years of intergovernmental negotiations, the issue of expanding the Council has assumed the utmost importance if we wish to improve the representation of the regions and groups that are underrepresented, such as Africa and my own region, Latin America and the Caribbean, to give just two examples — as was made clear in Sierra Leone's statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

By adopting the proposal of the Uniting for Consensus group, we could finally achieve a membership size that is fair in relation to the weighting of issues on the Council's agenda and geopolitical representation. Inclusivity and democracy in the reform of the Council will not be achieved by perpetually extending the privileges of a few with regard to permanent membership and the right to veto, as has been reiterated by a number of delegations that have already made their statements.

On the other hand and in line with the proposal of the Uniting for Consensus group, we must insist that a process of regular elections and fair geographical regional distribution is the way to ensure a strengthened Security Council. Furthermore, as explained by Ambassador Inigo Lambertini of Italy, longer

membership terms would strengthen the inclusive nature of the system, allowing the Council to become a more representative, transparent and effective space, with sufficient legitimacy for the permanent fulfilment and implementation of its mandates.

For Colombia, it is important to stress that expanding the membership of the Security Council must respect the principle of sovereign equality, as enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations. That is why it is our duty to work in such a way as to ensure that the United Nations is ready to face the challenge of a world that demands that everyone play an active role in building a peaceful and increasingly inclusive society.

Mr. Kafle (Nepal): Nepal commends President Lajčák's initiative in holding this debate on the important agenda item of Security Council reform. I congratulate the Permanent Representative of Georgia and the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates on their being appointed co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations process. My delegation believes that the negotiations process will soon resume under their able leadership and dedication to steer it with active and participatory consultations. I wish every success to the co-Chairs and pledge my delegation's full cooperation. I would also like to compliment the important leadership of the past co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations.

We must acknowledge the unanimity among Member States on the urgent need to reform the Security Council. However, the intergovernmental negotiations have become increasingly complex and slow moving, with far too limited progress. The challenge ahead is to build on the progress made so far and exhibit the political will to move forward. My delegation commends the elements of convergence that have emerged on two key issues, namely, the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly and the size of an enlarged Security Council and its working methods. We must continue to build on that progress, while combining synergies and the strongest sense of cooperation for the next steps.

We live in a world that has undergone significant changes. The global political landscape has changed dramatically, and the contours of the balance of power are being redefined. The United Nations has expanded four-fold since its creation, while the Security Council has experienced just one limited expansion. Reform is essential in order to ensure that the Council will be able to handle the challenges of the modern era and the emerging realities. The current state of affairs is, therefore, not an option, and Nepal calls for flexibility from Member States to reach convergence on other remaining clusters so that we can move forward in the reform process.

Nepal has been a long-standing partner in United Nations peacekeeping and civilian protection around the world and is honoured to have served twice so far in the Council. As far as Security Council reform is concerned, Nepal does not belong to any group and from its national perspective merely wishes to reiterate a number of points. The expansion of the number of both permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council must reflect the contemporary geopolitical reality. In short, Nepal underscores the need for greater representation in the Council for Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regional groups. The expansion of the permanent member category should correct that historical error and ensure the representation of Africa, among others.

Likewise, it is essential to ensure the equitable representation of developing countries. In that connection, Nepal understands the merit of the aspirations of the Group of Four to join the Council as permanent members. Nepal believes in the fair and judicious principle of rotation on a regional and subregional basis. In particular, the contribution to international peace and security should be given due recognition during nomination and election, especially when the contributing countries are relatively small and face special situations, such as the landlocked developing countries or countries emerging from conflict. In fact, the landlocked developing countries should be represented as a special constituency in the Council, based on their special permanent feature of a geographical hardship with serious security implications.

Nepal supports the total elimination of the right to veto, in conformity with the principle of sovereign equality. Nevertheless, until we reach the state of the absolute abolition of the right to veto, Nepal supports exercising restraint on the use of the veto. There should be no new tier of members introduced, such as permanent members with or without veto. The expansion of membership should ensure equitable geographical representation and should enhance inclusiveness in the decision-making process of the Security Council. Any

enlargement of the Security Council sh ld take into account the concerns of the smaller countries.

The Council should neither be so big that its efficiency is seriously compromised, nor so small that it fails to be representative. Therefore, the size of the Security Council should be expanded to 24, ensuring that each non-permanent member of the Council can hold the presidency at least once during its two-year term. The intergovernmental negotiations are a Member State-driven process. We stress the need for a democratic, representative, transparent, inclusive, effective, efficient and accountable process to make the Council fit for purpose in fulfilling the mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

Nepal affirms that the Council should not encroach on the authority and work of the General Assembly and other organs. While we welcome the increased exchange of information between the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council, we would also like to see an enhanced level of coordination and consultation between the two bodies so as to maintain accountability, transparency and coherence in the work of the Council.

In order to enhance transparency there should be more briefings and information-sharing for non-members about the decisions of the Council. While welcoming the Council's open meetings, which enable non-members to be heard, the Council should also seek to ensure that all important ideas are taken on board in the decision-making process. In conclusion, only the strong political will and flexibility for convergence among Member States with regard to the much-needed Security Council reform will contribute to enabling the Council to fulfil its goal of maintaining international peace and security and creating a peaceful world. Sooner rather than later, all Member States should kick-start their efforts in that direction.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): Pakistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by Italy on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus group. My delegation also congratulates the Ambassadors of the United Arab Emirates and Georgia on their appointment as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations process. We assure them of our full support in moving this process forward.

Over the years, we have become accustomed to hearing a litany of complaints from a handful of delegations about the slow pace of reform. They argue that the intergovernmental negotiations process has become a means to perpetuate the status quo, rather than a vehicle of change; and that in time the process has become an end in itself.

Taken at face value, that view has merit, but we cannot but marvel at those delegations for liberally blaming others when the responsibility for the impasse lies squarely on them. These countries seek a privileged and unequal status for themselves, anchored in power politics, which is in sharp contradiction to the democratic spirit of our times. Even more telling, while they remain firmly wedded to their positions, they ask others to be flexible. It is equally disingenuous for them to invoke the majority principle in seeking membership of the Council, when they deny the same principle to the larger membership of the United Nations when they are being held to account. It is not a lack of will on the part of the many, but a lack of will on the part of a few that remains the most persistent stumbling block in the way of achieving a more representative, transparent, accountable and effective reform of the Security Council.

Decision 62/557 lays the overarching framework and mandate for intergovernmental negotiations — a membership-driven process with the aim of achieving comprehensive reform on the five equally important and interlinked issues, which are to be facilitated in good faith, with mutual respect and in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, with the objective of achieving the widest possible political acceptance on the part of the membership. Those are not just noble aspirations, but agreed parameters for reform.

Yet what we have seen, unfortunately, is the repeated tendency by some to sidestep consensus through quick fixes and procedural manoeuvres. Such attempts not only turn the process into a majority-minority calculus and undermine mutual trust, but they also betray a lack of common understanding over the fundamentals of the issue. Seeking to introduce a text into such a chasm will not bridge our differences, it will accentuate them. We would be better served by not chasing such a chimera. What is required is not to set artificial deadlines, but instead, to heed the call for flexibility and readiness to find common ground. The Uniting for Consensus group has lived by that ideal, calibrating its position to reflect the interests and aspirations of all Member States — small, medium-sized and large. It is time for others to show the same spirit of compromise and the same spirit of flexibility.

Pakistan's views on Security Council reform are well known. We are firmly opposed to the creation of new permanent seats, as they are contrary to the universally agreed principles of democracy, accountability and transparency. After all, permanent membership remains at the core of much that is flawed about the existing Security Council. It is therefore counter-intuitive, in our view, to advocate an expansion in the Council as a means to address its inherent dysfunctionalities. That could, at best, be a measure to promote the self-serving interests of a few who deride the permanent membership as an anachronism, yet stand ready to embrace it in the same breath. It cannot become the rationale for a well-meaning and comprehensive reform effort. An enlarged permanent membership of the Security Council would also compromise its efficiency and effectiveness.

At a time when growing and complex challenges to global peace and security warrant firm and clear action by the Security Council, an enlarged permanent membership, operating on the basis of the least common denominator, would erode the standing of the Council and not strengthen its role, as some would have us believe. On the other hand, expansion in the non-permanent category of membership, based on equitable geographic distribution and a system of fair rotation, a solution that my country favours, is both fair and just and is supported by all Member States and groups. That should serve as a natural point of departure for any reform of the Security Council.

It also speaks to the imperative of reflecting contemporary realities. As contemporary realities are tied to the present, how can a permanent status be bestowed upon a transitory, impermanent state. That inconsistency can be answered only by longer-term non-permanent seats with possible re-election. Similarly, an expansion in the non-permanent category will foster a wider and fairer rotation within regional groups. What is needed are seats for the regions, not seats merely claimed on their behalf.

On the issue of regional representation, we fully respect the Common African Position, which voices the demand of an entire continent, as being inherently different from the demand for permanent seats in pursuit of narrow national ambitions.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm that Pakistan remains steadfast in its commitment to comprehensive reform of the Security Council. Anything less would be a great disservice to the United Nations and the inspiring vision that it espouses for all our collective humankind.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): At the outset, allow me to thank the President for convening today's debate on this crucial topic. We are all convinced that the United Nations has to be fit for purpose and that Security Council reform should help to make the United Nations more credible and stronger. The Security Council needs to have the capacity and readiness to adequately respond to all the challenges in the world and live up to its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. But that has not, unfortunately, always been the case.

Before turning to some elements most important to Estonia regarding the reform, I would like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Romania and Tunisia for their hard work leading the intergovernmental negotiations in the previous session and wish the very best for the Permanent Representatives of Georgia and United Arab Emirates in their endeavours during the seventy-second session.

Now, let me highlight the most important issues for Estonia in the Security Council reform process. We have had to witness, on numerous occasions, how some members of the Council have used or threatened to use the veto, leaving the Council paralysed and unable to react to situations where action is needed the most. Estonia has expressed before and continues to highlight its position that permanent members of the Security Council should voluntarily and collectively commit themselves not to use their veto to block Council action aimed at preventing or ending situations involving mass atrocity crimes.

As a member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency group, Estonia also supports the group's code of conduct calling for all members of the Council not to vote against credible Security Council resolutions that are aimed at preventing or ending genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. We welcome the wide support expressed by 114 Member States for the code of conduct. Hopefully, more countries will be lending their support to the code in the near future. Estonia has also reiterated its support for the initiative by France and Mexico on the use of the veto. We believe that those two initiatives are complementary and share a common goal.

Let me also highlight another issue important to Estonia regarding the expansion of the Security

Council. The United Nations must adapt to the realities of current times. Estonia believes that every country, small or big, should have the opportunity to be represented in the Council, but it is absolutely vital that small nations have a stronger voice.

Finally, let me emphasize that small steps in improving the working methods of the Security Council can bring about a positive effect with much wider reach. Estonia would like to see greater accountability, coherence and transparency of the Council's activities through increased inclusiveness and targeted action. These principles are key in governing our State. We consciously apply them, as we believe they will make our governance more effective and easier to understand by people. We believe that the same principles would have an even greater effect at the regional or global level and therefore should be embraced and used by different international organizations, including the United Nations. As a body representing all States Members of the United Nations, the Security Council could also benefit from these principles.

We also need better communication between the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Security Council should be kept accountable by all Member States by ensuring more transparency in its actions and more cohesiveness in resolutions and decisions. It is a shortcoming of the Council that its rules of procedure are still provisional. It is very much up to Council members to make use of existing procedures and the Council's different outreach formats to achieve a better outcome for their work.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm Estonia's commitment to engaging constructively in the intergovernmental negotiations during the seventy-second session to continue moving the reform process forward.

Mr. Hahn Choonghee (Republic of Korea): I thank the President for his initiative in convening this annual debate on Security Council reform. I also extend a warm welcome to the co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations, Ambassador Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates and Ambassador Imnadze of Georgia. I have every confidence in their ability and leadership. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Jinga of Romania and Ambassador Khiari of Tunisia for their contributions as co-Chairs last year.

At the outset, the Republic of Korea aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group.

We all have agreed on the imperative of reforming the Security Council, and the reason why we have been pursuing this agenda is quite clear. Facing the complex challenges of today, we are now feeling an increased sense of urgency to transform the Security Council into a more effective entity that is better able to fulfil its primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

However, we have unfortunately not seen any meaningful progress since we started our discussions more than 25 years ago. But make no mistake: the lack of progress, I believe, is not due to our inaction or a weak sense of urgency. If anything, this situation reflects the degree of sensitivity and gravity required in this discussion, which will lead to a sea change in the international geostrategic landscape and the architecture of global governance and will eventually affect all people around the world. In this regard, let us remind ourselves that it is high time to think about the basics and purposes of our discussion and to redouble our efforts aimed at working together.

When we pursue the reform of the Council, I believe that the most important factors are, first, the principles of the reform; secondly, the process of our deliberations; and, thirdly, the actual outcomes. With respect to these three underlying factors, the Republic of Korea has very clear positions and views.

First and foremost, we have repeatedly suggested that the reform must be based on clear principles, namely, a democratic underpinning, representativeness, transparency, accountability and effectiveness. I am pleased to see that, over the most recent intergovernmental negotiations meetings, we have been narrowing, rather than widening, the gaps of our understanding on these principles. Without any hesitation, Korea firmly believes that the UfC position, which is highlighted by a new category of long-term re-electable seat, is the best fit for all our principles, such as being democratic, representative, accountable and effective.

Secondly, our entire deliberative process should be, as decision 62/557 articulates, aimed at seeking a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States. However, there must be more to the phrase "the widest possible political

acceptance" than just a number. Indeed, a spirit of working together towards a more expanded and robust consensus will be needed, particularly in an agenda as complicated as this one. At this moment, I believe that there is still a fundamental and philosophical difference of views between the expansion of permanent seats and the expansion of non-permanent seats with longer-term renewable terms.

Thirdly, Security Council reform is urgent, but the reform should be right and just. It must also be sustainable. Considering that the dynamics of international politics have been, and will constantly be, in a state of flux, it is of paramount importance to come up with a sustainable and democratic mechanism in the Council that works in the long term. Through such a mechanism, aspirant countries, including African States, should be given appropriate opportunities — now and in the future — to play an enlarged role in the Council.

I am confident that only through the creation of the longer-term re-electable seat could any country apply for this seat at any time — now or in future, when that country feels that it is ready to do so. This process, based on the election of a candidate, will ensure open competition and equal opportunity for all Member States.

To achieve our vision for a principled, sustainable and most widely acceptable reform of the Security Council, the Republic of Korea, along with other members of the Uniting for Consensus group, has proposed to establish a new category of longer-term re-electable non-permanent seats. Our suggestion is based on the clear conviction that reform cannot be accomplished by just following the concepts of permanency and veto, which was a system reflecting the unique situation and context after the Second World War. Further, a merely enlarged version of the current Council will eventually exacerbate the very problems that vex us today rather than solve them. Instead, we believe that increasing the number of democratically elected non-permanent seats, including longer-term seats, will alone offer a clear way forward. Moreover, it will avoid the problems of the veto altogether.

The permanency of seats and the veto represent a single issue — two sides of the same coin. Therefore, if we consider expanding the number of permanent seats, we will get entangled with the veto issue because the veto is inextricably linked to the concept of permanency; the problem lies in its very nature.

The Republic of Korea sincerely hopes that the seventy-second session of the General Assembly and the coming intergovernmental negotiations will produce tangible results as we strive to achieve the long-overdue reform of the Council. I assure the General Assembly that the Republic of Korea stands ready to constructively work with others to formulate a solution that can garner the support and understanding of the entire membership, and one that the general public and the people of the international community can fully believe in and welcome.

Mr. Cortorreal (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I appreciate the convening of this meeting of the General Assembly to discuss the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters. We welcome the appointment of our colleagues Ambassador Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates and Ambassador Imnadze of Georgia to co-chair the intergovernmental negotiations on this issue. We also thank Ambassador Jinga of Romania and Ambassador Khiari of Tunisia for their efforts in continuing to find points of convergence on the subject of Security Council reform.

Since the creation of the United Nations, the world has changed. The Security Council finds it increasingly difficult to prevent conflicts, consolidate peace and stop atrocities. In this context, Security Council reform becomes increasingly critical. We believe that such reform would guarantee the sustainability of the community of nations and global causes. We believe that the Security Council must live up to the demands of today's world and that of the future.

The Dominican Republic has been endorsed by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to take a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the period 2019-2020, in the elections to be held in June 2018. If we receive the mandate from the members of the General Assembly, our main objective will be to redouble our efforts aimed at revitalizing the role of the Security Council, thereby enabling this important organ to face the new challenges that currently exist for small island developing States, such as climate change, environmental degradation and the increased frequency of natural disasters.

I would like to briefly recapitulate our position on Security Council reform. We reiterate our support for the expansion of both categories of seats — permanent

and non-permanent — in the Council. In this regard, we call for an improved representation of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions, thereby lending due consideration to the adequate representation of the small and medium-sized Member States, which account for the vast majority of the membership of the United Nations. Likewise, we consider it necessary to reform the working methods of the Security Council with a view to increasing transparency and efficiency. We support the commitment to carrying out negotiations on the basis of decision 62/557, which the General Assembly adopted in September 2008.

We already have a fairly comprehensive historical record of the progress made during this cycle of intergovernmental negotiations, in particular the framework document prepared by the Ambassador of Jamaica in 2015, as well as the important contribution recorded in the last two sessions. We believe that, to achieve concrete results in and due respect for negotiation processes in the United Nations, political will is required.

Finally, the Dominican Republic would like to reiterate its willingness and commitment to continuing to constructively participate in all initiatives undertaken with the objective of creating a Security Council that reflects the diversity of the United Nations membership, which calls for the broadest flexibility in negotiations. We believe that such steps would increase the legitimacy, transparency and inclusiveness of the Organization. The role played by the General Assembly in the process of selecting the Secretary-General demonstrated that all Member States can and must contribute to strengthening the work of the United Nations, thus updating and expanding the democratic character of global governance.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): I thank the President for convening this important plenary meeting and inviting us to speak. My delegation appreciates the fact that the President has decided to advance Security Council reform as one of his priorities for the seventy-second session of the General Assembly and for his leadership on this important issue.

International cooperation, understanding and genuine dialogue are increasingly necessary if we are to meet contemporary global challenges. A United Nations system that is fit for purpose is needed to support this cooperation. All Member States seem to agree in principle on the fundamental idea of reforming the United Nations in order to make it stronger and more responsive to the people it serves. Security Council reform is an essential part of the comprehensive reform of the United Nations, and Slovakia continues to be committed to finding a favourable outcome in terms of Council reform so as to make the organ more broadly representative, efficient and transparent.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Kaha Imnadze, Permanent Representative of Georgia, and Ambassador Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates, on their respective appointments as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations. I would like to assure them of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the forthcoming negotiations. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the former co-Chairs, Ambassador Jinga and Ambassador Khiari, for their dedication and hard work.

We welcome the intensified efforts undertaken during previous General Assembly sessions to bridge proposals and identify ways to move the work forward. We should continue and accelerate the process of the intergovernmental negotiations based on the results reached by the end of the sixty-ninth, seventieth and seventy-first sessions. I should like to note that my delegation joins other countries in calling for the start of text-based negotiations on Security Council reform that would give the intergovernmental negotiations a substantive meaning and take us to the next stage in this important process.

The position of my delegation on the possible review of the membership of the Security Council is consistent and well documented. Slovakia supports the expansion of membership in both the permanent and non-permanent categories and calls for an increase to no more than 25, representing geographical balance. The new members of the Council should, as a principle, have the same responsibilities and obligations as the current ones. I wish to underscore that a reformed Council should include one additional non-permanent seat for the Group of Eastern European States.

We welcome the developments in the direction of enhancing the Council's working methods. We hope that further improvements can be achieved on issues such as peacekeeping, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peace enforcement. Similarly, we welcome positive movements towards improving the Council's relationship with other United Nations

organs, such as the General Assembly, the Secretariat and the Peacebuilding Commission, inter alia, as well as regional and subregional organizations, especially the African Union, the European Union and others. These efforts should continue.

The five key reform issues set forth in decision 62/557 remain the guiding principles of our work in the intergovernmental negotiations. While divergent opinions remain about all five issues, we should explore them again in greater detail, giving special consideration to the following: first, how best to address the wide political acceptance of the common African position; secondly, how best to reflect the changing global reality in an updated Security Council; thirdly, how to effectively translate the universal agreement on the expansion of the two-year non-permanent-member category into practice, given that more than 60 States Members of the United Nations have never been members of the Security Council to date; and fourthly, how we can all move together to the next stage of negotiations.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to engaging in open, transparent, inclusive and results-oriented negotiations, with a view to moving the process forward during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the President for having organized this meeting. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Ambassadors Jinga of Romania and Khiari of Tunisia for their skilful work as co-Chairs of the intergovernmental negotiations at the previous session of the General Assembly. I also wish to congratulate Ambassador Imnadze of Georgia and Ambassador Nusseibeh of the United Arab Emirates for their respective appointments as co-Chairs for this session. They can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation in working constructively on the issue that we are being asked to consider.

Argentina endorses the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus group. Nevertheless, I wish to make a number of points.

Once again, today we are tackling the work before us aware of the need to be flexible and find agreement. We are profoundly committed to multilateralism because such a commitment is the only guarantee of success. Argentina trusts that all delegations will demonstrate similar flexibility because only through multilateralism, based on concrete actions and leadership capability, will they be able to uphold the interests of all nations and bring about a Security Council that is more democratic, truly inclusive and efficient, and which could adequately fulfil the responsibilities assigned to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

Argentina was dismayed by the outcome of the last round of intergovernmental negotiations because we saw a group of countries stating that there was no agreement on the principle of democracy as a principal guide in the reform of the Council. The principle of accountability is crucial to ensure a more effective and efficient Security Council, which is an objective that, to date, has not met with disagreement.

If the Security Council is to be more effective and efficient, we need to enhance the transparency of its actions and strengthen its democratic representativeness. Argentina is therefore convinced that during the next intergovernmental negotiation process there needs to be an interest in achieving a more broad political agreement on Security Council reform and that issues of principle need to be addressed without delay, leading to agreements on such fundamental principles as equitable representation and membership categories, inter alia.

Based on our experience from this long process of negotiation, Argentina continues to be ready and willing to find innovative and robust ways that will ensure a more democratic representation on the Security Council, improve the prospects of non-permanent members and reform the working methods of the Council, making it more transparent, interactive and inclusive. The Charter states that in order to ensure rapid and effective action on the part of the United Nations, its Members entrusted the Security Council with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. It also recognizes that the Security Council acts on behalf of Members in discharging the functions imposed by this responsibility.

The victors of the Second World War assumed that responsibility on a permanent basis, but any State that sees peace as a key element of its development would must actively assume that responsibility as well. Argentina therefore supports only an increase in the non-permanent-member category, because permanency is intrinsically antagonistic to the notion of representativeness in a democratic context in which

the will of the represented legitimizes and periodically informs such representativeness. It is well known that any legitimate and representative democratic system worthy of the name is underpinned by the fundamental element of elections. Moreover, Argentina believes that including new permanent members on the Council would not ensure greater participation of the members that today are not represented therein and considers the idea of expanding the permanent-member category in the context of today's extremely complex and evolving international reality to be unpromising.

Since the Organization's very inception, the Argentine Republic has explicitly defended the principle of the sovereign equality of States. Against the backdrop of Security Council reform, this principle will be upheld only if we create conditions in which every Member State has a chance to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, giving greater prominence to regional representation by adjusting the relative proportions of regional group to bring about more equitable representation. The proposal of the Uniting for Consensus group takes this concern into account and is the only proposal of commitment presented in recent years to address in a balanced and fair manner the aspirations of the different groups that have participated in the intergovernmental negotiation process.

Improving the working methods of the Security Council is of the utmost relevance for Argentina. We have taken every opportunity to encourage the Council to work in a transparent and open fashion and be accountable for all its actions before the Organization as a whole.

In conclusion, Argentina reiterates and reaffirms its willingness to continue working with an open mind on all proposals which, respecting the principles granted by the General Assembly, would bring positions closer with a view to implement the necessary democratic reform of the Security Council.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker for this morning's meeting on this matter. I wish to thank the interpretation service for its commitment and patience.

Programme of work

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before closing this meeting, I wish to remind members that the consideration of agenda item 73, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance" (including sub-items (a), (b) and (c)), which was to take place in a meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday, 7 December, has been postponed to Friday, 8 December at 3 p.m.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.